



**DELHI UNIVERSITY  
LIBRARY**

**DELHI UNIVERSITY LIBRARY**

Cl. No. Q6:21:9

H31

Ac. No. 172844

Date of release for loan

14 JAN 1963

This book should be returned on or before the date last stamped below. An overdue charge of 0.6 nP. will be charged for each day the book is kept overtime.

---



# LIST OF VOLUMES PUBLISHED IN THIS SERIES

## GENERAL PHILOSOPHY.

1. **First and Last Things.**
3. **The Riddle of the Universe.**
5. **On Liberty.**
10. **History of Modern Philosophy.**
27. **The Evidence for the Supernatural.**
57. **Clearer Thinking : Logic for Everyman.**
62. **First Principles.**
68. **Liberty To-day.**
73. **Natural Causes and Supernatural Seemings.**
78. **The Man versus the State.**
84. **Let the People Think.**
88. **World Revolution and the Future of the West.**
92. **The Conquest of Time.**

H. G. WELLS.  
ERNST HAECKEL.  
J. S. MILL.  
A. W. BENN.  
DR. IVOR LL. TUCKETT.  
A. E. MANDER.  
HERBERT SPENCER.  
C. E. M. JOAD.  
HENRY MAUDSLEY, M.D.  
HERBERT SPENCER.  
BERTRAND RUSSELL.  
DR. W. FRIEDMANN.  
H G WELLS.

## PSYCHOLOGY.

46. **The Mind in the Making.**
48. **Psychology for Everyman (and Woman).**
85. **The Myth of the Mind.**

JAMES HARVEY ROBINSON.  
A. E. MANDER.  
FRANK KENYON.

## ANTHROPOLOGY.

- 14 & 15. **Anthropology** (2 vols.).
26. **Head-hunters : Black, White and Brown** (illus.).
29. **In the Beginning : The Origin of Civilization** (illus.).
40. **Oath, Curse, and Blessing.**
45. **Men of the Dawn** (illus.).
80. **Jocasta's Crime.**
82. **Kingahip.**
87. **Man Makes Himself.**

SIR E. B. TYLOR.  
DR. A. C. HADDON.  
Prof. SIR G. ELLIOT SMITH.  
ERNEST CRAWLEY.  
DOROTHY DAVISON.  
LORD RAGLAN.  
A. M. HOGART.  
V. GORDON CHILDE.

## GENERAL SCIENCE.

12. **The Descent of Man.**
36. **Savage Survivals** (illus.).
41. **Fire-side Science.**
47. **The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals** (illus.).
59. **Your Body : How it is Built and How it Works** (illus.).
61. **Man and His Universe.**
65. **Dictionary of Scientific Terms.**
67. **The Universe of Science.**
76. **An Architect of Nature.**
89. **The Origin of the Kiss, and other Scientific Diversions.**
94. **Life's Unfolding.**
95. **An Easy Outline of Astronomy.**

CHARLES DARWIN.  
J. HOWARD MOORE.  
SIR E. RAY LANKESTER.  
CHARLES DARWIN.  
DR. D. STARK MURRAY.  
JOHN LANGDON-DAVIES.  
C. M. BEADNELL, C.B., F.Z.S.  
Prof. H. LEVY.  
LUTHER BURBANK.  
C. M. BEADNELL, C.B., F.Z.S.  
SIR CHARLES SHERRINGTON.  
M. DAVIDSON.

## RELIGION.

4. **Humanity's Gain from Unbelief, and other selections from the Works of Charles Bradlaugh.**
9. **Twelve Years in a Monastery.**
11. **Gibbon on Christianity.**
17. **Lectures and Essays.**
18. **The Evolution of the Idea of God.**
19. **An Agnostic's Apology.**
22. **The Pathetic Fallacy : A Study of Christianity.**
24. **A Short History of Christianity.**
30. **Adonis : a Study in the History of Oriental Religion.**
31. **Our New Religion.**
34. **The Existence of God.**
35. **The Story of the Bible.**
44. **Fact and Faith.**
49. **The Religion of the Open Mind.**
51. **The Social Record of Christianity.**
52. **Five Stages of Greek Religion.**
53. **The Life of Jesus.**
54. **Selected Works of Voltaire.**
60. **The Age of Reason.**
81. **The Twilight of the Gods.**
83. **Religion Without Revelation.**
- 90 & 91. **The Bible and Its Background (2 vols.).**
93. **The Gospel of Rationalism.**
96. **The God of the Bible.**

## HISTORY.

6. **A Short History of the World (revised to 1941)**
13. **History of Civilization in England (Vol. 1).**
20. **Historical Trials (A selection).**
33. **A History of the Taxes on Knowledge.**
39. **Penalties Upon Opinion.**
72. **A Short History of Women.**

## FICTION.

37. **The Revolt of the Angels.**
38. **The Outcast.**
70. **The Fair Haven.**
77. **Act of God.**

## MISCELLANEOUS.

2. **Education : Intellectual, Moral and Physical.**
7. **Autobiography of Charles Darwin.**
16. **Iphigenia.**
28. **The City of Dreadful Night, and other Poems.**
32. **On Compromise.**
43. **The World's Earliest Laws.**
55. **What are We to do with our Lives ?**
60. **What is Man ?**
63. **Rights of Man.**
64. **This Human Nature.**
66. **A Book of Good Faith.** Selections from the Works of MONTAIGNE, arranged, and with an Introduction, by
71. **A Candidate for Truth.** Passages from RALPH WALDO EMERSON chosen and arranged by
74. **Morals, Manners and Men.**
75. **Pages from a Lawyer's Notebooks.**
79. **The World as I See It.**
86. **The Liberty of Man, and Other Essays.**

JOSEPH McCABE.

T. H. HUXLEY.  
GRANT ALLEN.  
SIR LESLIE STEPHEN, K.C.B.  
LLEWELYN POWYS.

J. M. ROBERTSON.  
SIR J. G. FRAZER.

RT. HON. H. A. L. FISHER.  
JOSEPH McCABE.  
MACLEOD YEARSLEY.  
PROF. J. B. S. HALDANE.  
A. GOWANS WHYTE.  
JOSEPH McCABE.  
PROF. GILBERT MURRAY.  
ERNEST RENAN.  
Trans. by JOSEPH McCABE.  
THOMAS PAINE.  
RICHARD GARNETT  
JULIAN S. HUXLEY.  
ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON.  
C. T. GORDHAM.  
EVANS BELL.

H. G. WELLS.

H. T. BUCKLE.  
SIR JOHN MACDONELL, K.C.B.  
COLLETT DOBSON COLLET.  
H. BRADLAUGH BONNER.  
JOHN LANGDON-DAVIES.

ANATOLE FRANCE.  
WINWOOD READE.  
SAMUEL BUTLER.  
F. TENNYSON JESSE.

HERBERT SPENCER

TWO Plays by EURIPIDES.  
JAMES THOMPSON ("B.V.").  
JOHN VISCOUNT MORLEY, O.M.,  
P.C.  
CHILFERIC EDWARDS.  
H. G. WELLS.  
MARK TWAIN  
THOMAS PAINE.  
CHARLES DUFF.

GERALD BULLETT.

GERALD BULLETT.  
HAVELOCK ELLIS.  
E. S. P. HAYNES.  
ALBERT EINSTEIN.  
R. G. INGERSOLL.

IN SEARCH OF THE  
REAL BIBLE



THIS BOOK IS PRODUCED IN COMPLETE  
CONFORMITY WITH THE  
AUTHORISED ECONOMY STANDARDS

*The Thinker's Library, No. 98.*

# IN SEARCH OF THE REAL BIBLE

BY

A. D. HOWELL SMITH

B.A.(Cantab.)

Author of *Jesus Not a Myth*

“Nothing extenuate, nor set down aught  
in malice.” —SHAKESPEARE.

LONDON:

WATTS & CO.,

6 JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET STREET, E.C.4



*First published 1943*

Printed and Published in Great Britain by C. A. Watts & Co. Limited,  
5 & 6 Johnson's Court, Fleet Street, London, E.C.4

# CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I. WHAT IS THE BIBLE? . . . . .	1
II. THE GROWTH OF THE CANON . . . . .	15
III. "HUMAN-ALL-TOO-HUMAN" . . . . .	19
1. The Bible Contradicts Itself . . . . .	19
2. Falsified History . . . . .	23
3. Bible Obscenities . . . . .	24
4. The Bible Condones Lying . . . . .	27
5. Bible Atrocities . . . . .	29
6. Bible Absurdities . . . . .	34
7. Prophecies Falsified by the Event . . . . .	39
IV. THE BIBLE AND SCIENCE . . . . .	43
V. THE EVOLUTION OF THE IDEA OF GOD . . . . .	49
VI. THE LOWER CRITICISM . . . . .	59
VII. THE HIGHER CRITICISM . . . . .	60
VIII. THE SPADE AND THE CRITIC . . . . .	88
IX. SUMMING UP . . . . .	103
TIME CHART . . . . .	114
SUGGESTIONS FOR READING . . . . .	119



## CHAPTER I

### WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

"THE Bible is none other than the voice of him that sitteth on the throne. Every book of it, every chapter of it, every verse of it, every syllable of it (where are we to stop?), every letter of it, is the direct utterance of the Most High . . . faultless, unerring, supreme."

So spoke Dean Burgon from the pulpit of St. Mary's, Oxford, nearly a hundred years ago. The majority of Protestant Christians of that time thought of the Bible as he did. A much smaller proportion still think so; they are generally named, at least by their opponents, Fundamentalists, and among them are men of ripe scholarship or scientific achievements. Few people to-day read, still less study the Bible, even though they may attend church or chapel, where it is often read out to them (portions of it, rather) in a dreary, sing-song voice, and conveys very little meaning; for readers and hearers it seems to be a sacred fetish of words. The ignorance of fanatics and cranks, who may have considerable knowledge of its contents but are generally ill-informed on questions of textual or historical criticism, exploits the Bible in the interests of some ridiculous theory, like Anglo-Israelitism. The task of the sober student in the face of folly, bigotry, and indifference is hard indeed.

While Protestantism is changing its views of the Bible, the Church of Rome adheres to its rigid dogma of Biblical infallibility. The writers of the Bible, it insists, were the penmen of the Holy Spirit, so

that every statement of theirs bears the stamp of truth. The official exponents of Catholicism, however, do not now claim that "every syllable" is "the direct utterance of the Most High." A distinction is made between revelation and inspiration. Dean Burgon's description of the Bible obliterates this distinction. In spite, however, of the clear negation in Pope Leo XIII's encyclical, *Providentissimus Deus* (1893), of the possibility of error on the part of the inspired writers, Catholic apologists have argued that errors may occur in the sacred text, though such errors are not put forward as statements of truth. "Jack and the Beanstalk" is not a true story; yet who would accuse of deceit the man who told it to a child? The length to which some Catholics, modernistically inclined, would carry this principle has embroiled them with the ecclesiastical authorities. Catholics are not only committed to the Fundamentalist position, but since the Council of Trent (1545-63) are further pledged to receive the contents of the Old and New Testaments, including several books the Protestant rejects as "Apocrypha" ("Deuterocanonical" is the Catholic term for them), "*entire with all their parts, as they have been used to be read in the Catholic Church, and as they are contained in the old Latin Vulgate edition.*" Catholics, then, must acknowledge a number of texts in the Vulgate which a careful comparison of Greek manuscripts, further checked in the light of early translations into various languages and of patristic quotations, proves could not have formed part of the original documents, but have been added by late copyists. If the words cited do not mean that the Vulgate should always be given the preference in the case of a disputed reading, they mean nothing at all. Moreover, what edition of the Vulgate must the Catholic accept as for him the Word of God? Jerome was the

author of the Vulgate, which he produced between A.D. 383 and 420, with the encouragement of Pope Damasus. His work was necessitated by the corrupt state into which the old Latin version (dating from the late second or early third century) had long since fallen. In the course of time Jerome's translation became itself corrupt. Alcuin reformed the text under the great Emperor Charlemagne (768-804), but "even the Monastery of St. Martin de Tours, from which Alcuin, as Abbot, had directed this reform, was pouring forth a stream of corrupt texts within a few years of his death!"<sup>1</sup> The standard Bible produced by the University of Paris in the thirteenth century was based on a corrupt text, and so high an authority on the subject as the Dominican Father Denifle says that this proceeding "gave up the Bible to mere caprice." Nearly all printed editions based themselves on the text of this standard Bible, which is the foundation of that to which the modern Catholic is pledged by the decree of Pope Clement VIII, issued in 1592. Sixtus V published a version of the Vulgate in 1590, which "by the fulness of apostolic power" he ordered to be received by all the faithful as "*true, lawful, authentic, and unquestioned*, in all public and private discussion, reading, preaching, and explanations." To alter this version in the slightest degree entailed "the indignation of God and of the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul," as well as the penalty of the greater excommunication. The text of the version issued by Sixtus V was so "authentic" that it had to be corrected in more than two thousand places and re-issued, with these corrections, by Clement VIII only two years later. While very many of the errors eliminated by the new version were mere misprints, they

<sup>1</sup> *The Roman Catholic Church and the Bible* (Medieval Studies No. 14, p. 20), p. 19, by G. G. Coulton, Hon.D.Litt.

were not all so, and Clement VIII, in issuing a text as "authentic" and as heavily defended with anathemas as that of his predecessor, admitted his neglect to make certain alterations for which there was justification; this neglect was not "for the sake of avoiding popular offence," but mainly because the Pope wanted simply to reproduce Jerome's translation! Can the well-instructed Catholic feel confident that Clement VIII's version of the Vulgate is really less free from errors than that of Sixtus V, although it may be an improvement on some of its predecessors? It is not claimed that the decrees of these two Popes are covered by the definition of Papal infallibility in 1870.

While most of the objections to the inerrancy of the Bible tell as much against Protestant Fundamentalism as against the Roman Catholic Church, the latter has involved itself in additional difficulties by its extension of the Canon. The Second Book of Maccabees is among the books Catholics must believe were written at the dictation of the Holy Spirit. But the author was quite oblivious of its inspiration. Otherwise would he have written at the end of his history: "And if (I have written) well and to the point in my story, this is what I myself desired; *but if meanly and indifferently, this is all I could attain unto*" (2 Macc. xv, 38)? So a penman of the Holy Spirit was inspired to apologize for his (the Holy Spirit's?) possibly mean and indifferent writing! He (the Holy Spirit?) could do no better!

Protestant Liberals do not deny inspiration in the Bible. God speaks to men through the Biblical writers; but the heavenly gold is mixed with much earthly dross, especially in the earlier books. The Bible is the record of a progressive revelation. Through myth and legend; through tortured history; *through ethical teaching, gradually purging itself of*

barbarism; through folklore not free from obscenity, stories of absurd miracles, fiercely patriotic romances, tedious ritual and legal codes; through endless genealogies, erotic poems, millennial dreams, apocalyptic visions, harsh prophetic fulminations, hymns of passionate piety, hymns of hate, wordly-wise saws, neatly turned moral platitudes, rhapsodical blasphemies, and the lucubrations of sceptics and pessimists men have been slowly prepared for the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. The New Testament is no more free from blemishes than the Old, but it approaches nearer to perfection. There is a large "human element" in the Bible, and, as T. H. Huxley said, it serves as a veritable whipping-boy for the "divine element." How large the human element is continues to be a matter of keen debate. An erudite Anglican work, *A New Commentary on Holy Scripture* (edited by the late Dr. Charles Gore), makes a great many concessions to modern criticism as regards the Old Testament, but is conservative, on the whole, in its attitude to the New. Some Anglican scholars go very far in heterodoxy on this question. The *Encyclopaedia Biblica* (edited by the late Canon Cheyne) leaves little to be desired from the point of view of a Rationalist.

The claims made for the Bible are similar to those made for other sacred books. The ancient Sanscrit poems known as the Vedas are held by most Hindus to be divinely inspired. The Zoroastrians say the same of their Avesta. The Koran is the Word of Allah, revealed to his apostle Muhammad. Dean Burgon's outburst in *St. Mary's* recalls the utterance of the pious Cādi Iyād (d. 1140): "The Koran as it lies between the two covers is God's own word. . . . Therefore it is in every way inimitable, and no man can produce anything like it." Sacred books abound. *The Jains of India have their holy scriptures;*



the Bahais of Persia have theirs. The Sikhs pay intense reverence to their *Adi Granth*, which has the chief place of honour in the Golden Temple at Amritsar. There is the Book of Mormon, copied from golden plates brought by an angel from heaven and thither conveniently wafted back. The Buddhist Tripitaka ("Three Baskets") are not indeed held to be the Word of God—Buddhism has no God in the Christian or Islamic sense—but to the majority of Buddhists this immense collection is sacrosanct, and disbelief in any one of its statements would be regarded as profane. "What Buddha said is well said." A quasi-sancity attaches to the Chinese classics, the five *King* and the four *Shu*, and to the Japanese chronicles, the *Kojiki* and the *Nihongi*. The ancient Greeks revered the poems of the legendary Homer, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*; so much so that when, in later times, many of the stories in these epics strained Hellenic credulity an attempt was made to read into them allegories and philosophical ideas. The same method of interpretation was followed by Philo of Alexandria in his commentaries on the Pentateuch, and by the Christian Origen when confronted by the less credible stories of the Gospels.

The Bible is frequently referred to as the "Old Book" or the "Good Book." But it is not a book. The very name is an anglicization of the name given to the Hebrew Scriptures in the earliest Greek translation, the Septuagint—*Ta Biblia* ("The Books"). The Bible is a collection of documents covering perhaps a thousand years, perhaps more. Ignorant people in this country think it was written in English. One such is recorded to have said that if plain English was good enough for St. Paul it was good enough for him. But the Authorized Version (1611), which so many treat as though it were the actual Word of God, ignoring or condemning the much later and far

more accurate Revised Version, only comes at the end of a long series of English Bibles, which begins with Wycliffe's translation of the Vulgate in the fourteenth century. The Old Testament was composed in Hebrew, with the exception of parts of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel, and Jer. x, 11 (a marginal note intruded in the text), which were written in Aramaic (a kindred language), while the New Testament was composed in Greek—not the Greek of Homer, Aeschylus, or Plato—but the *Koiné* ("Common") tongue, which was spoken all over the Eastern Mediterranean region in the days of the Roman Empire. Hebrew is a much more defective language than Greek, while in many places the text of the Old Testament is corrupt, and in others so confused that the translation is mere guesswork. Profs. W. O. E. Oesterley and T. H. Robinson write: "There is no book in the Old Testament which has suffered more from textual corruption than Hosea. There is hardly a single verse of which the reader can be sure that it has not been more or less altered, generally by accident. A large part of the text, as it stands, is meaningless, though sense can often be obtained by very slight changes."<sup>1</sup> Other books of the Old Testament exhibit textual corruptions, some in greater and others in smaller measure. This disconcerting feature affects a number of favourite texts, e.g. "In all their afflictions he was afflicted" (Is. lxiii, 9). How many eloquent and consoling sermons have been preached from these words! God, or God in Christ, shares all our sufferings. But Dr. R. H. Charles tells us that this text is untrustworthy, being "based on a late Hebrew emendation." The original text *may* have been "In all their adversity he was not an adversary"<sup>2</sup>—a very different and much less consoling idea!

<sup>1</sup> *An Introduction to the Books of the Old Testament*, p. 354.

<sup>2</sup> *The Resurrection of Man*, pp. 180, 181.

Vowel signs, placed below or after consonants, were invented a very long time after the Hebrew Canon had been formed. The readers in the Synagogues saw only consonants on their scrolls and were forced to rely on their memory of a far from infallible tradition as to what vowels should be pronounced. Many confusions were bound to arise from such a system of writing, a system characteristic of other Semitic languages in ancient times. To take an illustration from English. If we were in the habit of writing "bd," omitting vowels, these two letters could stand for "bad," "bed," "bid," "bide," "bode," and "bud."

The copying out of Greek manuscripts of the New Testament did not involve the same difficulties, as Greek, like other Aryan tongues, was always written with both consonants and vowels. In the earlier Greek manuscripts—known as "uncials"<sup>1</sup>—only capital letters were used; the writing was arranged in parallel columns, with the same spacing for words and letters. The cursive script was not employed for the New Testament until over five hundred years after the beginning of our era. If the opening words of the Fourth Gospel, as given in the Authorized Version, were written

IN THE BEGINNI  
NG WAS THE WORD  
AND THE WORD WA  
S WITH GOD AND T  
HE WORD WAS GOD

the chances of textual error in copying out a manuscript would be considerable.

The oldest dated Hebrew manuscript of any part of the Old Testament is presumably still in Leningrad

<sup>1</sup> From Latin *uncia* ("inch"), each letter being about an inch in length.

(formerly St. Petersburg), where it has lain for many years; it bears the date A.D. 916 and comprises the works of the Prophets. There is a still older Hebrew manuscript, but this is not dated, though there are good reasons for attributing it to the ninth century.

The many Hebrew manuscripts now in existence show an extraordinary agreement. For centuries the Jews practised the utmost scrupulousness in copying out their sacred books. Even where the traditional text was clearly wrong the scribe would put the superior readings only in the margin. Biblical scholars are agreed that every one of these manuscripts is derived from a text drawn up about A.D. 100, to which the name "Massoretic," after *massorah* ("tradition"), has been given. A comparison of the Massoretic text with the earliest Greek translation of the Old Testament, known as the "Septuagint" ("Seventy," in allusion to the legend of the seventy Jews who are said to have produced it in a miraculous manner), which was begun about 250 B.C., proves that the translators must have had before them a text often widely different from the Massoretic, and it is far from easy to decide when to follow the one in preference to the other. Differences can, in many cases, be explained on the view that the Septuagint translators had an imperfect knowledge of Hebrew, and sometimes dealt freely with their documents in the interests of the public they served; but not all differences can be so explained. It must be confessed by all candid persons that the extreme scrupulosity of the later Jewish scribes was not practised by those of earlier centuries.

The Samaritan Pentateuch, used by the dwindling community of Jewish schismatics on Mount Nablous in Central Palestine, affords another means of checking the Massoretic text. As the Samaritans confined their Canon to the Pentateuch, we have only the

Septuagint and other translations to compare with the Massoretic text of the Prophets and the remaining books. The differences between the Samaritan and the Massoretic texts are seldom important. The text of the Samaritan Pentateuch may date from about 408 B.C. or perhaps seventy years later, when Manasseh, the grandson of the Jewish High Priest, Eliashib, led the schism; but this text may have been introduced after the schism. This gives us an early and independent tradition of the state of the Hebrew text of the Pentateuch, shortly after the time when, according to most Biblical critics, this great composition was virtually completed. The date of the oldest manuscript of the Samaritan Pentateuch is not earlier than the tenth century of our era, so far as is known.

Another criterion of the Hebrew text is furnished by the Targums, paraphrases of the Old Testament into Aramaic, the tongue increasingly spoken by the Jews after their return from the Babylonian Exile. The Targums consist of: the Palestinian Targum of Jonathan Ben Uzziel on the Prophets (which include Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings); a Palestinian Targum on the *Torah* (the Pentateuch), falsely ascribed to Jonathan Ben Uzziel; and the Babylonian Targum of Onkelos on the *Torah*. The first of these dates from the fourth century of our era, the second from the seventh century, and the third, according to the best critical opinion, from the third century, on the basis of an earlier paraphrase.<sup>1</sup> Sir Frederic Kenyon, one of our most important authorities on Biblical textual criticism, states that the Hebrew text from which the Targums were made, a text current in Judæa about the end of the first century before Christ, "was not identical with that which has come down to us."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts* (1st ed.), pp. 29-31, by Sir Frederic Kenyon.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

The problem of the original text of the New Testament presents much fewer difficulties. A very large number of Greek manuscripts exist, and there are also many manuscripts of the Armenian, Syriac, Coptic, Latin, and other versions. Until recently the Vatican Codex (in Rome) and the Sinaitic Codex (formerly in Leningrad, except a few leaves in Leipzig, and now in the British Museum) were the oldest known Greek manuscripts; they go back to the early fourth century. Next to them in antiquity are the Alexandrian Codex (in the British Museum), the Codex Ephraemi (in Paris), and the Codex Bezae (in Cambridge); the first two of these date from the fifth century, and the third from the sixth century. The Codex Bezae presents a number of peculiarities, and has readings not found in any other Greek manuscript, including the story of the man whom Jesus found working on the Sabbath.

Of recent years considerably older manuscript evidence has been forthcoming to help in the reconstruction of the original text. A collection of Greek papyri from Egypt, named after Mr. Chester Beatty, who owns the greater part of them, belong to eleven different codices; they include portions of both the Old and the New Testaments. Some of the Old Testament portions are believed to be as early as the second century, while those of the New Testament are attributed by palaeographers to the third century.

When the Authorized Version was drawn up by James I's conference of learned theologians at Hampton Court, in 1611, only quite late manuscripts were available to them for translation. The Hampton Court divines followed the *Textus Receptus* ("Received Text"), which had been prepared by Erasmus of Rotterdam, after extensive manuscript collation, in the previous century. The Vatican Codex lay unknown to English scholars in the Papal Library.

The Alexandrian Codex did not become accessible to the scholars of Western Europe before the reign of Charles I, to whom it was presented by Cyril Lucaris, Patriarch of Constantinople. It was not until the nineteenth century that Tischendorf discovered the Sinaitic Codex. These and other valuable manuscripts that could be consulted by the eminent scholars, mostly members of the Church of England, who were responsible for the Revised Version (1881-1885), enabled them to present the public with a much more accurate text, though the Revised Version has never been popular, and provoked charges of sacrilege and blasphemy from the "unco guid" of the time. A comparison of the two versions demonstrates that the New Testament, as we have it, contains many interpolations as well as alterations of the original text, most of them unimportant, but a few affecting Christian dogma, and others sayings of Jesus and episodes of his life. The text about the Three Witnesses (the *Comma Johanneum* = "Johannine Section," 1 John v, 7), a famous proof text of the dogma of the Trinity, is omitted from the Revised Version. No Greek manuscript earlier than the fifteenth century possesses it; the Greek and the African Fathers knew nothing of it, nor did Jerome, the author of the Vulgate. The earliest to quote it was a Western theologian, Priscillian (late fourth century), the first Christian to suffer death at the hands of Christian rulers for his heretical beliefs. The Revisers did not venture to omit Mark xvi, 9-20, but drew attention in a note to its dubious authenticity. This passage is absent from the Sinaitic Codex, from the Old Syriac (the Sinaitic Palimpsest),<sup>1</sup> from

<sup>1</sup> "Palimpsest" (Greek *Palin-vestos* = "Again Rubbed"). This term is used for old manuscripts in which later writing has been superimposed over an earlier composition, the earlier having been partly effaced. Chemistry has made it possible to restore the underlying script.

nine of the older Armenian manuscripts, and apparently from the original form of the oldest Latin manuscript (the Codex Vercellensis); it appears, however, in the Alexandrian Codex and the Codex Bezae. Other manuscripts have a shorter and quite different ending for Mark: Stylistic and other variations from the rest of this Gospel here betray themselves. But can we believe that Mark ended with the words "for they were afraid" (*ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ*)—the word "for" coming last of all), especially as v. 7 leads us to expect a sequel? Various explanations suggest themselves. The earliest copy may have been made from a mutilated original, or perhaps the Evangelist had come to the end of his scroll. The scroll form of manuscript limited a writer in the way a book, bound in covers, did not. The oldest manuscripts of the New Testament, like those of the Old, were all scrolls.

The impressive story of the woman taken in adultery, which now forms part of John viii, is also queried by the Revisers. Most Greek manuscripts omit it, while some place it at the end of the Fourth Gospel and others after Luke xxi, 38; it certainly fits badly its present context. According to Eusebius of Caesarea, Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis, in the first half of the second century, was acquainted with the story of a woman "accused of many sins before the Lord"; this looks like another version of the one with which we are familiar.

There are several mis-translations in the Authorized Version. Paul of Tarsus (most probably a later writer, posing as the great Apostle) is made to condemn "the oppositions of science falsely so called." The real meaning of the passage is "the Antitheses of the falsely so-called Gnosis."<sup>1</sup> A work entitled

<sup>1</sup> "Gnosis" is the Greek for "Knowledge," and is applied to a number of mystical doctrines professed by the "Gnostics,"



*The Antitheses*, written by Marcion, the famous heresiarch of Gnostic tendencies, was current about the middle of the second century; this work contrasted the God of the Old Testament unfavourably with the God of the New, and argued that Christ had come to save all who believed in him from the tyranny of the first of these deities. It seems likely that Marcion's treatise is referred to here.

people who claimed to have spiritual insight into divine things, denied to ordinary men. There were Pagan, Jewish, and Christian Gnostics. Marcion had affinities with the Gnostics, but apparently did not so describe himself.

## CHAPTER II

### THE GROWTH OF THE CANON

THE many books of the Old Testament were not accepted as sacred all at once. Even as late as the time of Jesus there was much disputation among the Jews about a few books, such as the Song of Solomon and Ecclesiastes, now included in the Canon. The schools of Hillel and Shammai took opposite sides. Not until the first quarter of the second century of our era did the Hebrew Canon reach its present limits. For the first generation of Christians the Old Testament comprised the whole of their sacred writings. Outside Palestine it appears that most Christians followed the Greek-speaking Jews—the Jews of the Dispersion—in accepting as inspired a number of other books rejected by the Aramaic-speaking Jews. These books were dogmatically declared by the Council of Trent to form part of the Word of God, and so all Catholics are bound, under pain of anathema, to acknowledge their authority.

The books rejected by Protestants are named by them “Apocrypha”<sup>1</sup> and by Catholics “Deuterocanonical” (“Belonging to the Second Canon”). These all exist in Greek, which is the original language of some of them. Several, including the First Book of Maccabees, the First Book of Esdras, and Judith, were composed in Hebrew; but only in the case of Ecclesiasticus has the Hebrew original (a few leaves)

<sup>1</sup> Apocrypha (Gk. “Hidden Things”). The term was generally applied to a number of pseudonymous works professing to embody secret revelations from God. Jerome was the first to give this name to the Deuterocanonical books, but not in the pejorative sense the word had hitherto carried.

come to light. Authorities differ as to whether the Book of Tobit was written in Hebrew or Aramaic. The two existing Hebrew texts of this work are translations, one from the Septuagint and the other from an Aramaic version.

The New Testament Canon was only very gradually formed. The heresiarch Marcion appears to have been the first to collect any of the Christian books into a canon; his canon consisted of ten of the Epistles of Paul (the *Apostolicon*) and a shorter edition of the Gospel of Luke (the *Evangelicon*)—a few scholars have argued that Marcion's "Gospel of the Lord" was really the Gospel of Mark. The Catholic Canon began to take shape after the middle of the second century, and by its close most of the books now held canonical had received recognition as Holy Scripture. We learn, however, from Christian sources that well into the fourth century the right of about half a dozen books to a place in the Canon was still disputed by many. Among these disputed books was the so-called Second Epistle of Peter. Many of the early Christians were doubtful of the authenticity of the "Revelation of John the Mouthpiece of God" (*Theologos*), and of the authenticity of the Epistles ascribed to James and Jude. The Epistle to the Hebrews was not generally received as canonical by the Western Churches before the fourth century. Till then they denied its Pauline authorship, belief in which caused the Eastern Churches to regard it as Holy Scripture. By the "Damascine" Council, held at Rome in 382, and by the Council of Carthage in the year 397, the Canon of the New Testament was settled as we now have it. These two Councils also acknowledged as inspired the Deutero-canonical books. A few eminent theologians continued to dispute the right of some or all of these books to canonicity; but their objections were finally over-

borne. To-day the Church of Rome is followed by the Orthodox Churches of the East in the acceptance of the Deutero-canonical books, which were rejected by the Reformed Churches in the sixteenth century.

The names and order of the Books of the Old Testament, as given in the English Bible, are mostly taken from the Septuagint. The Hebrew titles and arrangement are quite different. Genesis is called in the Hebrew Canon *B'rēshīth* ("In The Beginning"), while Exodus is called *V'ēlleh Sh'moth* ("And These (Are) The Names"); in both cases the title is formed by the opening words of the book. The English titles, which are really Latinised Greek, mean "Generation" ("Origin") and "Way Out." It was the Septuagint translators who divided Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, each into two books. The first two of these are classified as the First, Second, Third, and Fourth Books of "Reigns." The Hebrew title of Chronicles is *Dibre Hayyāmim* ("The Things of the Days"). In the Septuagint this book is named "The Things Omitted" (Τὰ Παραλειπόμενα); this means that it is supplementary to the earlier historical books. The title "Chronicles" is due to a suggestion of Jerome and comes from his Vulgate.

The Hebrew Canon is threefold; these divisions are held to represent three successive stages in the formation of the Canon, covering a period of over four centuries. The threefold Canon consists of:—

- (1) The *Torah* ("Law")—comprising the Pentateuch ("Five Books") attributed to Moses.
- (2) The *Nebi'im* ("Prophets")—(a) The Former *Nebi'im* (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings); (b) The Latter *Nebi'im*, consisting of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and "The Twelve" (forming a single scroll, *i.e.* Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah,

Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habbakuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi).

(3) The *Kethubim* ("Holy Writings")—(a) Psalms, Proverbs, Job; (b) The Five *Megilloth* ("Scrolls"), *i.e.* Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther; (c) Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah (one work), Chronicles.

The word "canon" (κανών) is Greek, and meant originally a carpenter's rule, and later a rule or standard by which things or persons should be judged. It may be stressed here that the Book of Daniel does not rank with the *Nebi'im*, but with the *Kethubim*; we should have expected this book to be placed in the second division. Modern Biblical critics see in this fact an argument for the lateness of Daniel and refuse to attribute it to its traditional author.

## CHAPTER III

### “ HUMAN-ALL-TOO-HUMAN ”

THIS striking phrase of the celebrated German philosopher and man-of-letters Friedrich Nietzsche—“ menschliches-all-zu-menschliches ”—was coined by him to describe human morality, which has generally been held to be the product of divine norms revealed infallibly to the human conscience. We may justifiably use it as descriptive of the so-called Holy Bible. The Bible, as we have already remarked, is a literature, the work of many diverse minds, mostly concerned with religion. If it is true that God inspired all they wrote, we shall be forced to believe that he was the source of all their follies and failings. As even wilful fraud betrays itself in parts of this literature, God is confessed, on the theory of plenary inspiration, to have been a great deceiver of many generations in many parts of the world.

#### 1.—THE BIBLE CONTRADICTS ITSELF

There is nothing surprising in the contradiction of one writer by another, or even in the contradiction of one writer by himself. But if the Bible is infallible, no disharmonies of statement or opinion by its authors could exist. Such disharmonies, however, do exist, and cannot all be attributed to the blunders or deliberate tampering of copyists. A large book would be needed to exhibit all of them, and while it would anger the orthodox it would bore the general reader. Here a small selection must suffice.

The story of the Flood, related in Gen. vi-ix, is

composed of two narratives, whose differences of matter and style betray two authors; these have been blended by an editor, who has slightly redacted them. According to one of these authors, God commanded Noah to bring into his ark “ *of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort . . . they shall be male and female* ” (Gen. vi, 19). The second author tells us that Noah was commanded to preserve from the Flood “ *of every clean beast . . . seven and seven, the male and his female; and of the beasts that are not clean two, the male and his female; of the fowl also of the air, seven and seven, male and female* ” (Gen. vii, 2, 3). Here is a palpable contradiction. The object of Noah's selection of birds and animals was “ to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth ” (Gen. vii, 3). The writer who makes God command Noah to choose ceremonially clean animals in groups of fourteen, seven of each sex, tells us of a sacrifice from these by Noah upon Mount Ararat, after the waters of the Flood had disappeared. No sacrifice formed part of the narrative of the other writer, and so pairs of males and females of all species sufficed to replenish the world's fauna.

Everyone is familiar with the story of the boy David slaying in single combat the Philistine giant, Goliath of Gath (1 Sam. xvii). In 2 Sam. xxi, 19, this feat is attributed to “ Elhanan the son of Jaare-oregim the Bethlehemite.” After the fight with Goliath Saul is reported to have said to his chief captain Abner: “ Inquire thou whose son the stripling (David) is ” (1 Sam. xvii, 56). Yet for some time David had served as Saul's armour-bearer and harpist (1 Sam. xvi, 18-23). Hardly a stripling of whose antecedents the King of Israel could have been ignorant! In fact, Saul had been expressly told who this man was (1 Sam. xvi, 18, 19). The contradiction is easily understood when we realize that the Book

of Samuel is a compilation from lost documents by different hands.

According to 2 Kings xxiv, 8, Jehoiachin, the penultimate King of Judah, was eighteen years old when he began to reign in Jerusalem, but, if we are to believe 2 Chron. xxxvi, 9, he was then only eight.

The Book of Kings expressly states that before the reign of Hezekiah even those Jewish monarchs whose heart was " perfect with Yahweh (the Lord) " failed to remove the " high places " (*bamoth*), where an irregular cult was practised—irregular according to the compiler of this late book (1 Kings xv, 14; xxii, 43). The Chronicler, who is a much later historian, could not believe that such pious persons could have so flagrantly disobeyed the Law of Moses, which he believed to have existed, substantially as we have it, in the days of the old Hebrew monarchy. So he flatly denies their guilt (2 Chron. xiv, 3; xvii, 6).

Contradictions confront us in the New Testament as well as in the Old. According to the first three Gospels, Jesus ate the Passover with his disciples on the eve of his death (Matt. xxvi, 18; Mark xiv, 12; Luke xxii, 15). This is in glaring opposition to the clear statements of the Fourth Gospel that the last supper of Jesus took place before the Paschal feast (John xiii, 1, 29; xviii, 28; xix, 31).

The death of Judas is variously reported. According to Matt. xxvii, 3-8, Judas hanged himself in remorse for the betrayal of Jesus, and the priests bought with the blood-money, which the traitor flung at their feet, " the potter's field," where his suicide took place, in order to provide a burial-ground for foreigners; this field came to be known as " the field of blood." In a speech of Peter to the other Apostles, recorded in Acts i, 18, 19, Judas is said to have purchased a field with " the reward of iniquity " paid him by the priests, and to have died there by spon-



taneous combustion and disembowelment (nothing is said of hanging). Therefore the field was named the field of blood. Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis, a theological Simple Simon of the second century, reported yet a third story of the traitor's end. Judas died by disembowelment, as Peter is reported to have said; but this was due to a chariot crushing him against the wall in a narrow street. It is a legitimate inference that Papias either knew nothing of the two New Testament stories of the fate of Judas or else did not believe them.

The First, Second, and Fourth Gospels relate appearances of Jesus, after his resurrection, in Galilee as well as in Judea. The Third Evangelist so frames his narrative as to exclude any appearances in Galilee; it is clear that the Ascension is held by him to have taken place on the day of the Resurrection, or, at the latest, on the following day. According to Mark xvi, 7, the " young man " (angel?) at the tomb said to the woman: " But go, tell his disciples and Peter, He goeth before you into Galilee: *there shall ye see him*, as he said to you." Through the mouth of the " two men " (angels?) the Third Evangelist significantly substitutes " remember how he spake unto you *when he was yet in Galilee* " (Luke xxiv, 6); nothing is said of a command to the disciples to proceed to Galilee, in order to see their Master. Such a command would have stultified the narrative. In fact, the Evangelist makes Jesus expressly enjoin his disciples to tarry in Jerusalem until they are clothed with power from on high (Luke xxiv, 49). In the Acts of the Apostles, which is almost certainly from the same hand as the Third Gospel, although it seems to have undergone some re-editing, the period that elapsed between the Resurrection and the Ascension is said to have been forty days (Acts i, 3). Have these variant chronological schemes any historical value?

## 2.—FALSIFIED HISTORY

This is a much more serious charge to bring against the Bible; but, unfortunately, the evidence for its truth is overwhelming. The most patent illustrations are to be found in Chronicles. The author or compiler of this work was well acquainted with the Book of Kings, and sometimes copied his predecessor's text almost word for word. It is impossible to read carefully, and free from theological bias, the story of the coronation of Joash in 2 Kings xi, 4-11, and then to compare it with the Chronicler's version (2 Chron. xxiii, 1-10) without becoming convinced that the latter writer has wilfully altered the earlier text. According to Kings, Jehoiada the High Priest " sent and fetched the captains over hundreds, of the Carites and of the guard, and brought them to him into the house of Yahweh " (v. 4). The Chronicler mentions " the captains of hundreds " (2 Chron. xxiii, 1, 9), whose names he gives, but says nothing of " the Carites and the guard." In his eyes the entrance of such profane persons—the Carites were foreigners—into the Temple would be a horrible sacrilege. So he omits the words " brought them into the house of Yahweh." Priests and Levites take the place of the Carites, since they, of course, had a right to enter the Temple, according to the Law of Moses. The compiler of Kings knew only part of the present Pentateuch, which was not completed until a century or more after his time. He was ignorant of the Priests' Code and of the pseudo-historical narrative in which it was embedded—a document that was framed between his date and that of the Chronicler. The Chronicler was of the same breed as the authors of the Isidorean Papal Decretals, the *Donation of Constantine*, the *Acta Sanctorum*, and other ecclesiastical forgeries of the Middle Ages, who had no

scruple in lying for the greater glory of God or for the pecuniary profit of men. The Chronicler may, it is true, have persuaded himself that what ought to have been must have been. We must not be too harsh in blaming one who belonged to an age when ideas of historical impartiality or fidelity to fact meant little or nothing.

### 3.—BIBLE OBSCENITIES

Here we are treading on very delicate ground. Confusion is often made between the indecent and the obscene. Obscenity is always indecent; but indecency is not necessarily obscene. Obscenity is always base; but canons of decency vary with cultural changes and are never quite free from arbitrariness. It is monstrous to speak of sexual organs or normal sexual acts as obscene, though this is often done. The adjective "obscene," however, can justly be applied to sexual perversions, especially when these involve cruelty. Some Freethinkers of the nineteenth century condemned the Bible as unsuitable for a Victorian boudoir or class-room. It seems odd to demand that the Creator of the universe should inspire no writing that would cause the wearer of a crinoline to blush. Girls of 1850 may have fainted or pretended to faint at the mere sounds "womb," "parturition," "fornication"; but those of 1943 are not so squeamish. If the Bible just called a spade a spade, and condemned sexual sins without namby-pamby circumlocution, no sensible man would condemn it on that account. The real indictment against much of the Bible, at least much of the Old Testament, is that its moral tone is coarse and barbaric. The Hebrew word for a woman simply refers to the sexual interest a man has in her. In early times a Hebrew woman was only a piece of property, a vent for man's

lust and a mechanism for child-bearing. The reverence shown to a few prophetesses does not disprove the truth of this statement. Barbarism can always furnish such exceptions that prove the rule. Adultery, in the eyes of the ancient Hebrews, meant robbing a man of his sexual goods and chattels. The Fourth Commandment forbids the coveting of a man's wife, donkey, and ox. No commandment in the Old Testament forbids the coveting of a husband by another woman as a wrong done by her to his wife. The Hebrew word translated "covet" means more than envy—it involves the idea of effort to obtain, as is clear from a comparison of Ex. xx, 17, with Ex. xxxiv, 24; "desire" in the latter text is a translation of the same Hebrew word as "covet" in Ex. xx, 17, and is shown by the context to imply active measures.

Daughters were at the disposal of their fathers; any man who received the paternal sanction, which generally had to be paid for, could sexually enjoy them. This comes out very clearly in the disgusting story of Lot and the men of Sodom. Heavenly beings ("Sons of Elohim") visit the nephew of Abraham, while low fellows from the Sodomite mob besiege his house and demand the handing over of his guests for homosexual purposes. As a considerate host Lot offers these lecherous beasts the opportunity of raping his virgin daughters. "Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes; only unto these men do nothing; forasmuch as they are come under the shadow of my roof" (Gen. xix, 8).

A kindred story, even more revolting, is told in Judges xix. A Levite and his concubine are entertained by her father at Gibeah, in the territory of the tribe of Benjamin. A mob of Benjaminites assaults

the house and threatens the Levite with their bestialities. So, quite in Lot's manner, the father offers his daughter for their enjoyment, while the Levite hands her over. A night of indiscriminate raping kills the poor woman. The Levite, finding her corpse at the door of the house next morning, is now enraged, having saved his life at his concubine's expense. He therefore cuts her into twelve pieces and sends them round "throughout all the borders of Israel" (v. 29) as a signal for war against the Benjaminites.

There are several other obscene anecdotes in the Old Testament, of which we may instance Ham's mockery of the intoxicated Noah (Gen. ix, 20-27—the original text seems to have spoken of castration and was altered by a shocked copyist), and the incest of Lot's daughters with their father after they had fuddled him with wine (Gen. xix, 30-38). Both these stories are malignant myths. Ham is named "the father of Canaan," that is, of the people of the land the Beni-Israel conquered. The myth of the outraged Noah is meant to justify the enslavement of the Canaanites by the Hebrews. The other myth is a filthy libel on the Moabites and the Ammonites, peoples near akin to the Beni-Israel and cordially detested by them. "The near in blood, the nearer bloody."

The Prophets were fond of symbolizing Israel as an unfaithful wife who went "a-whoring after other gods." The details of sexual infidelity are expatiated on in the boldest manner. Ezekiel is the worst offender. His lustful imagery of the two courtesans Oholah (Samaria) and Oholibah (Jerusalem) leaves very little to the imagination (Ezek. xxiii).

Something akin to madness stamped certain features of Hebrew prophetism. What but a touch of insanity could have persuaded Isaiah that his god had told him to walk in the public gaze with "buttocks un-

covered” (Is. xx, 2-4) and Ezekiel that he had received a divine order to bake his cake with human excrement (Ezek. iv, 12)?<sup>1</sup> The word *nabi* is said to mean “raver,” and there were groups of *nebi'im* who often attained to a frenzy so extreme as to make themselves stark naked. The spectators sometimes caught the mania and became *nebi'im* themselves (1 Sam. xix, 24). Strains of music were provocative of the prophetic mood (2 Kings iii, 15). These phenomena of Hebrew prophetism recall the dancing dervishes of Islam, the priestess of Apollo at Delphi, and the mediums of Modern Spiritualism. Subconscious cerebration, dramatizing as god or spirit, is at work in all these cases, even if one grants that contact with other dimensions of being explains occasional features.

#### 4.—THE BIBLE CONDONES LYING

Lying is certainly condemned in many Biblical texts. Yet God is described as using deception and deceiving agents for his own ends (1 Kings xxii, 23; Ezek. xiv, 9; 2 Thess. ii, 11). Nor were all the Biblical writers shocked at trickery and falsehood, when practised by men who specially enjoyed the divine favour. Abraham told Abimelech, King of Gerar, that Sarah was his sister (Gen. xx, 2). She was his half-sister and at the same time his wife; the latter fact Abraham suppressed. Abimelech then quite innocently added Sarah to his harem. Instead of God punishing the guilty Patriarch and his wife, who was a party to the fraud, he warned Abimelech in a dream that he was in danger of the divine wrath for what he had done. In fact, the innocent women of Abimelech's household tasted it in some measure,

<sup>1</sup> Insanity, in some measure, is quite compatible with genius. Dryden tells us that “great wits to madness oft are near allied.”

for they were smitten with temporary sterility; this certainly implies that a fairly long time had elapsed before the fraud was revealed by God to Abimelech, for how else could it have become known that all these people were barren (the text speaks of barrenness, not of impotence)? On learning the awful truth about his guiltless sin (if such an expression can be justly used), Abimelech restored Sarah, and Abraham then shamelessly excused himself by saying he would have been slain for his wife's sake (Gen. xx, 11-13). The much-lauded faith of Abraham very woefully failed in the hour of imagined peril. This complacent liar receives no blame from God either for his lack of honesty or for his disbelief in divine providence. And let us note that we have here another illustration of woman as a mere chattel, though a certain inconsistency is involved, as Abraham's frightened laxity might be thought to justify Abimelech in enjoying what had been offered him. The idea that a daughter might be disposed of, willy-nilly, by her father, but that a man could not permit another to cohabit with his wife unless he had first given her “ a bill of divorcement ” (Deut. xxiv, 1), marks a stage further removed from the gross sexual hospitality of the savage to the sense of woman's rights, whose recognition is the test of civilization.

Jacob obtains his blessing from Isaac by disguising himself, with his mother's aid, “ in skins of the kid of the goats,” so as to make his blind old father think that Esau, the hairy elder brother, is kneeling before him. The blessing is obtained by gross fraud; but Isaac apparently cannot withdraw it when Esau eventually exposes his brother's wickedness. The Hebrews, like other ancient peoples and like modern primitives, seem to have regarded blessings and curses as magical powers—once launched, they irresistibly reached their goal. “ Be lord over thy brethren,

and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee ” (Gen. xxvii, 29). These words of Isaac are held to have determined the history of his descendants. Fraud as the source of a nation's greatness!

# 5.—BIBLE ATROCITIES

Hideous cruelty receives repeatedly a divine sanction in the pages of the Old Testament. Moses is recorded to have commanded in the name of God the utter destruction of all the inhabitants of Canaan by the Beni-Israel. When they make war outside Canaan they may qualify their ferocity with some grains of mercy. All “ males ” are to be slaughtered; but the Beni-Israel may keep the women, the children, and the cattle for their own use (Deut. xx, 13-15). Apparently, “ males ” in the text means adult males, as the sex of the “ little ones ” is not mentioned, which would probably have been the case if only girls were to be spared.

Orthodox apologists urge in justification that the abominations of the Canaanites made it necessary to sweep away such moral lepers as an act of social hygiene. But the Canaanites were never exterminated, though no doubt some massacres took place when the Beni-Israel invaded their country. Many of the so-called Arabs of Modern Palestine are, partly at least, of Canaanite descent. Language is no criterion of race. The vices of the Canaanites were those that have existed in all civilizations, past and present, and the Jews were not free of them. But even if we accept this weak plea of baffled theologians, it does not cover the case of the Amalekites. The Amalekites were a Bedouin folk, who attacked the Beni-Israel shortly after the exodus from Egypt. They are not accused of extraordinary vices. The word of Yahweh, we are told, came through the Prophet Samuel, commanding Saul to slay the Amalekites, “ both man and



woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass ” (1 Sam. xv, 3). This was simply a revenge for an onslaught that had taken place three or four centuries earlier. “ I have marked that which Amalek did to Israel, how he set himself against him in the way, when he came up from Egypt ” (1 Sam. xv, 2). Happily, we have reason to believe that this massacre is unhistorical, at any rate on the scale here depicted. The wish was father to the thought. We discover the exterminated Amalekites alive and flourishing many years later, when they invaded the territory of the Philistines, burned the Philistine city of Ziklag, and carried off much booty, including two wives of David, who was then a marauding chieftain, allied with the Philistines, the hereditary enemies of his people, against his rival Saul (1 Sam. xxx, 1-6).

Among the lessons ordered to be read in Anglican churches are two chapters from the Book of Kings (2 Kings ix and x). In them we learn that Elisha the Prophet sent one of his subordinates to Ramoth-gilead to anoint King of Israel a ruffianly captain named Jehu, the son of Nimshi. This gangster, nothing loath, hurried off at once to Jezreel, where Joram, the reigning monarch, was residing, and murdered him and his guest, Ahaziah, King of Judah, as they were riding in their chariots. Jehu then visited Jezebel, the Queen Mother, and ordered the eunuchs to throw her out of a window of her palace. The street dogs afterwards devoured her corpse. The next feat of this hero was to have the seventy sons of Ahab put to death and their heads brought to him in baskets. Then he proceeded to slaughter the rest of Ahab's kinsmen and the brothers of Ahaziah. His crowning achievement was the massacre of all the worshippers of the Phoenician Baal residing in the Kingdom of Samaria, having first deceived them by a very gross lie. Yahweh told him that he

had done right in his eyes, and that because of this his descendants until the fourth generation should sit on the throne of Israel (2 Kings x, 30). The Prophet Hosea thought differently from the author of Kings. He represents Yahweh as saying: “ I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu ” (Hosea i, 4). Which of these two Biblical writers was really the mouthpiece of God? The author of the Book of Kings or Hosea? Both of them cannot have been inspired in this respect.

The so-called Law of Moses, which is now known to be highly composite and took many centuries to grow, contains many kindly and sensible enactments, but has also brutal and barbaric features. Let us consider one example here. In Num. v a strange rite is exacted from a woman whom her jealous husband suspects of infidelity. A magic test is applied. The husband must bring his wife to the priest, who takes an earthen vessel containing holy water. Dust from the floor of the Tabernacle is then put into the water. The woman's hair is loosened, and “ a meal offering of jealousy ” is placed in her hand. Having sworn her innocence, the woman is made to drink “ the water of bitterness,” after the priest has pronounced a curse, written it down in a book (a scroll of papyrus?), and washed it off somehow into the holy water. Should the woman be guilty, her belly will swell and her thighs rot away. There is no similar test of the infidelity of a husband. That there are bad laws in the Pentateuch the Fundamentalist is precluded from denying by his professed loyalty to the letter of the Bible, for Ezekiel represents God as saying that he gave the Beni-Israel “ statutes that were not good, and judgements wherein they should not live ” (Ezek. xx, 25).

A number of the psalms breathe the cruellest hatred towards personal enemies, though it is possible that

national enemies are generally contemplated in the Psalter; in any case, the sufferings of individuals of both sexes and all ages are gloated on. Let us take Psalm cix. The ferocious poet craves the vengeance of God on innocent and guilty alike. "Set thou a wicked man over him: and let an adversary stand at his right hand. When he is judged, let him come forth guilty; and *let his prayer be turned into sin*. Let his days be few; and let another take his office. Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. Let his children be vagabonds, and beg; and let them seek (their bread) out of their desolate places. Let the extortioner catch all that he hath; and let strangers make spoil of his labour. Let there be none to extend mercy unto him; neither let there be any to have pity on his fatherless children" (Ps. cix, 6-12). If God inspired the writer of these diabolical words, who inspired Jesus when he said: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt. v, 7)? Did the author of Psalm cix obtain mercy from the Heavenly Father Jesus preached? Or did he go into the outer darkness, where there is "wailing and gnashing of teeth"? Let the Christian Fundamentalists explain how they solve the dilemma.

Take again the pathetic poem, which has many elements of beauty, beginning: "By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept." The sadistic hatred of the last verse largely spoils what has gone before. "Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the rock" (Ps. cxxxvii, 9). Fancy a Christian congregation singing this to the accompaniment of a magnificent organ! But to most of the singers this text is but "words, words, words."

There are, to be sure, a large number of passages in the Old Testament breathing the tenderest humanity, aflame with the spirit of justice, and pleading for all

who are desolate and oppressed. But it is a case of " many men, many minds," and " the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns." Grave moral inconsistencies can exist in the same mind. The man who is gentle to his own child may be a demon to the child of another. From the same pulpit the voice that pleads for mercy shouts revenge.

The New Testament is generally humaner in its ethic than the Old. Yet it is the New Testament that teaches, in unmistakable language (*pace* the kind-hearted trimmers), the loathsome and paralysing doctrine of eternal torture, physical and mental, for sinners and unbelievers. The God of the Revelation is a far worse being than the God of the Pentateuch, and the ferocious gloating of its Christian author over the smoke that arises out of the fiery pit, where the enemies of his faith suffer " unto the aeons of the aeons," is echoed in the works of the early Christian Fathers (Tertullian is a notorious example), and in those of the Catholic saints and theologians of the Middle Ages. " Nothing should be denied the blessed," writes Thomas Aquinas, " that belongs to the perfection of their beatitude. . . . Wherefore in order that the happiness of the saints may be more delightful to them and that they may render more copious thanks to God for it, they are allowed to see perfectly the sufferings of the damned." The baseness this doctrine can bring to the human heart is painfully illustrated by one of John Keble's hymns, where he protests that if one surrenders the belief in hell one must forgo the hope of heaven. " For with the sinner's fear their hope departs, fast linked as thy great name to thee, O Lord." A great modern theologian of the Orthodox Russian Church, Nicolas Berdyaev, a man of deep psychological and ethical insight, has sought to rationalize the idea of hell as self-isolation tending to self-annihilation; but his

subtly argued thesis badly harmonizes with many Biblical texts.<sup>1</sup> The God of hell is a sadistic creation.

#### 6.—BIBLE ABSURDITIES

It is not possible to impart to everybody the same sense of the absurd. The beliefs of fetish-worshippers in West Africa strike the European missionary as absurd, while the fetish-worshippers sometimes think the same of the beliefs of the missionary. The medieval scholastics, some of them profound and subtle thinkers, believed in the reality of sexual intercourse of witches with Satan and the demons that served him, as well as in the magical assumption by demons of animal shapes. A modern erudite historian of witchcraft, the Rev. Montague Summers, believes the same.<sup>2</sup> To nearly all moderns who are not grossly illiterate these obvious truths, as everybody once considered them, appear to be ridiculous fables. We can only use the criteria of sense and nonsense that have grown up with the culture of civilization to which we belong. In the light of what we now know of the universe many statements of the Biblical writers must strike us as no less ridiculous than the demonology and stories about witches that frightened the Middle Ages and even later times. No one would insist on this fact if the Bible were put in the same category as the *Odyssey*. We can enjoy the adventures of Odysseus and the delicate humanism, naturally not unflecked by barbarism, that breathes through the whole story; we are not asked to believe in any part of it. But a still persisting and widely represented tradition forbids us to treat the Bible like other human documents. The harsh attitude of its critics is provoked by the obscurantism of the exponents of orthodoxy, who are not all of them sincere. To

<sup>1</sup> *The Destiny of Man.*

<sup>2</sup> *The History of Witchcraft and Demonology.*

the same cause is due the growing neglect of the Bible, which every friend of culture, theological or anti-theological, must deplore.

The Bible abounds in miracles, as most ancient literatures do. The progress of science and historical criticism has destroyed the evidence for many alleged miracles; but our present knowledge of the universe shows that a miracle story may often have a factual basis. Faith does cure certain diseases, at least those of a functional nature, though the line of demarcation between the functional and the organic is not always easy to draw. Not only at Lourdes, but at other sacred spots, Christian, Islamic, and Pagan, the blind have seen, the lame have walked, the deaf have heard, and paralytics have recovered the vigour of their limbs. The touch of a monarch (or rather faith in the efficacy of that touch) has probably charmed away the scrofula of hundreds, perhaps thousands. Stigmata seem to have appeared on saints gazing ecstatically at the crucifix. Corpses of both saints and sinners have resisted decay for centuries. Ascetics are said to have touched no food for months, perhaps for years, and yet to have continued some sort of physical life. Such stories naturally excite incredulity, and it is very difficult, if not impossible, to guard against conscious or subconscious fraud on the part of the ascetic. Somnambulists may consume food without knowing it, and, if they have a reputation for sanctity, this fact may make their friends reluctant to give them away. So good an observer as Madame David Neel, whose knowledge of Tibetan thought and life is unrivalled, declares that Tibetan mystics are known to spend many days stark naked amid snow and ice, their body-temperature being maintained by some method of breath-control and other practices as yet undisclosed.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See her *Mystics and Magicians of Tibet*.

The English Society for Psychical Research, and similar scientific bodies, of which eminent men and women are or have been active members, spend much time and money in examining the evidence for alleged physical and mental phenomena generally welcomed or shunned as supernatural—such phenomena as telepathy, clairvoyance, clairaudience, telekinesis, levitation, and ectoplasm. Scepticism is justifiable—so wide is the scope of malobservation and fraud, and so fallacious is apt to be the testimony of untrained minds<sup>1</sup>—but dogmatic denial is false to the spirit of science, and those who have neither the time nor the patience to devote to the often tedious researches required should beware of giving an *à priori* condemnation to conceptions of nature and human personality that may be finally validated.

One should always be chary of fixing the limits of the possible. Yet there are some things that put too great a strain upon belief. Can one believe that the magicians of the Pharaoh vied with Moses in turning their rods into snakes and then reconverting them into rods (Exod. vii, 11, 12)? They may have pretended to do so; but the Biblical writer does not regard this performance as a trick. Did God assist them? Or Satan? And is Satan a creator of life, like God? It strains one's credulity to credit even God with a miracle of this character. In the course of nature, which Theists regard as an expression of divine law, such saltations from the dead to the living, from a relic of a tree to a highly organized reptile, are never observed. Why should God violate nature in the interests, not only of his servant Moses, but of the enemies of Moses? Whether or no the story of the Egyptian magicians ever had a basis in fact, the pretence of turning rods into snakes is still

<sup>1</sup> Even great scientists have been fooled by mediums, e.g., Sir William Crookes, the famous chemist.

made by Egyptian snake-charmers; they hypnotize the animals by applying pressure to their necks, so that they can be held rigidly as rods by the tips of their tails. The natural inference is that ancient, like modern, claimants to supernatural power sought to impress the ignorant with clever legerdemain.

Nearly as amazing as the story of the snake-changed rods of Moses and the magicians of Egypt is that of the budding rod of Aaron (Num. xvii, 8). A dry stick puts forth flowers and almonds. Flowers are the reproductive organs of a plant. How did living seeds appear on a fragment of a dead tree? Omnipotence can bring this about? Yes, of course, a being who can do everything can do anything. Such empty statements lead us nowhere. But if we came across such a tale in any other literature, would we believe it? Even if this transformation is a metaphysical possibility, it is a biological improbability, and one's scepticism is enhanced by the fact that Aaron's budding rod has a large number of parallels. Some of these, like 'Ali's staff and that of Christopher, the Christian giant, may be thought to be motivated by the Pentateuchal story. But this cannot be true of the javelin of Romulus, the mythical founder of Rome. Romulus hurled his javelin from the Aventine to the Palatine Hill, where it fell and was transformed into a tree.

Balaam's ass (Num. xxii, 28-30) is said to have conversed with her master in Hebrew or Moabite. There is nothing supernatural about an ass imitating human words or sentences. We know that parrots and a few other birds can do so. But there is no evidence that an ass has the vocal cords that would make human speech possible. Animals may understand some things men say or even imitate their actions; but they cannot carry on a conversation.



If Balaam's ass talked to Balaam, as the Bible says, she must have been temporarily provided with a human brain; that is to say, she was no longer an ass, but a human being in disguise. Men or women transformed into animals, or *vice versa*, belong to mythology. Balaam's talking ass is as fabulous a creature as the talking horse of Achilles.

Let us consider the story of Saul's visit to the Witch of Endor (1 Sam. xxviii). Whatever we may think of the Spiritualists' claim to have demonstrated that the dead may communicate with the living through mediums, it is surely absurd to believe that an old woman could by her enchantments force an aged prophet to rise up from the underworld, clad in his mantle, many years after his death. Do Christians believe that their departed loved ones are in an underworld, at the beck and call of sinister magicians? Samuel's protest to Saul (1 Sam. xxviii, 15) implies that the power of the Witch of Endor had forced him to appear.

Can we believe that Elijah was blown up to heaven in a whirlwind while riding in a fiery chariot, drawn by fiery horses (2 Kings ii, 11)? Trimmers argue that the text does not expressly say that Elijah mounted the chariot, only that it appeared—probably as a symbol of the might of Yahweh; but its appearance is really intelligible only if Elijah was intended to use it. In his praise of famous men the author of Ecclesiasticus says of Elijah that he "was taken up in a tempest of fire, in a chariot of fiery horses" (Eccles. xlviii, 9). This is sufficient evidence that ancient Jewish readers understood the story of Elijah's flight as simple Jewish and Christian believers of later times have understood it.

What is heaven? Our stellar universe is one of several millions, covering unthinkably vast stretches of space. An old man blown upwards in a whirl-

wind through endless vistas of nebulae and milky ways—who can credit that?

The ascension of Jesus in a cloud is just as absurd a story. Modernists try to reduce it to an acted symbol or a vanishing into the fourth dimension (whatever that may mean). But the primitive Christians had no need of these ingenuities. For them, as for the ancient Hebrews, the earth was flat and motionless, the ghostly world of the dead just beneath their feet, and heaven in the sky but not too far away, where God reigned an eternal monarch, severe but not inexorable, amid the hosts of his loyal angels.

#### 7.—PROPHECIES FALSIFIED BY THE EVENT

Can the future be foretold? There is some apparently trustworthy evidence that prevision occasionally occurs. If so, our physics and metaphysics both need drastic revision. Einstein has substituted for the Newtonian absolute space and absolute time, in which isolated bodies attract one another "directly as the mass and inversely as the square of the distance," the idea of an infinity of space and time measurements, varying with "the frame of reference" of the observer; gravitation is equated with inertia and becomes a function of space-time; the isolation of bodies is an illusion. Einstein does not profess to be a metaphysician.<sup>1</sup> But one cannot doubt that his relativity physics, like other systems of physics, has metaphysical implications.

Our conceptions of space and time may undergo further revolutions, and in the light of the science of to-morrow the possibility of prevision may appear less staggering to reason than it does to-day. We

<sup>1</sup> For Einsteinian physics things are events, and the space-time interval that separates any two events is constant, though the space and the time measurements vary.

should not then deny on *a priori* grounds that real prevision may be found in the Bible or in other literatures, ancient and modern. But it is at least doubtful whether supernormal prediction, as distinct from shrewd guessing about the near future, can be attributed to any of the Hebrew Prophets whose writings have come down to us. The interpretation of a number of prophecies is often arbitrary or even fantastic. Several are only prophetic in form; in reality they are vaticinations after the event. Those in Daniel belong to this category.

In the Bible, prophecies occur which history has falsified. Isaiah foretold the drying-up of all the waters of Egypt, and the consequent destruction of all meadows and sown land, whose existence depends on the periodical overflow of the Nile. “And the waters shall fail from the sea, and the river shall be wasted and become dry. And the rivers shall stink; the streams of Egypt shall be minished and dried up: the reeds and flags shall wither away. The meadows by the Nile, by the brink of the Nile, and all that is sown by the Nile, shall become dry, shall be driven away, and be no more” (Is. xix, 5, 6, 7). None of these predictions have been fulfilled or seem likely to be so. To relegate their fulfilment to a remote future stultifies the Prophet’s warning, since it was against the Egypt of his age that he and his people had a grievance.

Jeremiah prophesied that Jehoiakim should have none to sit on the throne of David; he was succeeded by his son Jehoiachin (Jer. xxxvi, 30; cp. 2 Kings xxiv, 6).

Ezekiel prophesied the utter destruction of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. “With the hoofs of his horses shall he tread down all thy streets; he shall slay thy people with the sword, and the pillars of thy strength shall go down to the ground. And

they shall make a spoil of thy riches, and make a prey of thy merchandise . . . and I will cause the noise of thy harps to cease; and the sound of thy harp shall be no more heard. And I will make thee a bare rock; thou shalt be a place for the spreading of nets; *thou shalt be built no more*: for I Yahweh have spoken it, saith Yahweh Elohim" (Ezek.xxvi, 11-14). Nebuchadnezzar did not destroy Tyre. This feat was reserved for Alexander the Great, 240 years after the time of Nebuchadnezzar, and, despite the Prophet, Tyre *was* rebuilt. Something like 3,000 people now inhabit Tyre.

Again and again it is prophesied in the New Testament that Jesus will shortly return in the clouds from heaven, where he is now at the right hand of God, in order to raise the dead, judge the world, and set up his kingdom on a renovated earth. Jesus said: " This generation shall *not* pass away, till all these things be accomplished " (Matt. xxiv, 34), and again: " There be some of them that stand here, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom " (Matt. xvi, 28). In the Epistles of Paul and other New Testament propagandists we find the same confidence: " the time is shortened " (1 Cor. vii, 29); " at the end of these days " (or " in these last days ", Heb. i, 2); " but now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself " (Heb. ix, 26); " for yet a very little while, he that cometh shall come and shall not tarry " (Heb. x, 37); " who was foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world, but was manifested at the end of the times for your sake " (1 Peter i, 20); " but the end of all things is at hand " (1 Peter iv, 7); " behold, the judge standeth before the doors " (James v, 9). The opening words of the Revelation run: " The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to

shew unto his servants, (even) the things which must shortly come to pass” (Rev. i, 1). Almost the last verse of this book gives the assurance: “ He which testifieth these things saith, Yea: I come quickly. Amen: come, Lord Jesus ” (Rev. xxii, 20). The “ shortly ” (ἐν τάχει) of the first of these texts and the “ quickly ” (ταχύ) of the second both have the force of “ very soon.”

But the first generation of Christians died without the world changing its normal course, and, though hope of a speedy advent of Christ was slow to wane, by about the middle of the second century, if not earlier, men had begun to complain that “ all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation ” (2 Peter iii, 4). The author of the Second Epistle of Peter is a literary forger, writing probably more than a hundred years after the death of Jesus, who wants to be taken for the leader of the Twelve. His quibble that one day must be understood as a thousand years from the divine point of view, so that the promise of an imminent event means that millenniums may first elapse, is too ridiculous to be discussed.

Fundamentalists may be requested to consider, in the light of the many Biblical prophecies that the event has falsified, the following text: “ When a prophet speaketh in the name of Yahweh, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which Yahweh hath not spoken: the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously, thou shalt not be afraid of him ” (Deut. xviii, 22).

## CHAPTER IV

### THE BIBLE AND SCIENCE

SCIENCE is always changing. Yes, but its groundwork is never wholly destroyed. Vanished cosmologies are never rehabilitated. Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Lyell, Darwin, and probably Einstein have wrought permanent achievements. Ingenious harmonizers, like Sir J. W. Dawson and Dr. Samuel Kinns in the last century, tortured the early chapters of Genesis to make them say virtually what we have learned from modern astronomy, geology, palaeontology, and biology. The six days of creation have been interpreted as six epochs of indefinite duration. What about the seventh day, on which the Creator rested from his labours? The Fourth Commandment orders cessation from all work on that day, in imitation of the divine example. It is sophistical to interpret the seventh day figuratively, and this is equally true of the six days. Moreover, day and night are said to have existed before the origin of the sun. We know that this alternation is due to the rotation of the earth, its surface confronting and then being turned away from the great luminary. According to Gen. i, every form of vegetation, including fruit trees, arose in a sunless world. If we interpret the third day as a period of millions of years the absurdity of the statement is enhanced.

Another ingenious method of harmonization can be very briefly dismissed, for it is in violent antagonism to the whole of our geological and palaeontological knowledge. According to this school of harmonizers, the six days of creation are to be under-

stood literally; but this eventful week was really one of creating again a world that had fallen into chaos. The period before the lapse into chaos may have been long enough for the development of all the types of flora and fauna that have left fossil records in the rocks. A candid reading of Gen. i is no less hostile to such a theory than modern science.

The "dissolving views" theory, favoured by Dr. Samuel Kinns and others, is quite as inconsistent with Gen. i as the two theories we have just considered. According to this theory, God caused to pass before the eyes of Moses six scenes, representative of typical epochs in the past history of the earth, during which it was being prepared for man's habitation. Each day Moses beheld a fresh scene.

The Fundamentalist may, of course, fall back on the monstrous hypothesis put forward in Philip Gosse's *Omphalos*. According to Gosse, God created the world with apparent relics of a non-existent past abounding in its strata, just as Adam came into existence with a navel (Greek *omphalos*), although he had never been attached to a mother by an umbilical cord. To such reasoning one may retort the wise words of Herodotus: "He who carries back an explanation to what is imaginary cannot be refuted." But we are under no obligation to take the lawless play of imagination as our guide to truth.

Man is the child of the forest ape. He carries in his body vestiges of invertebrate, piscine, reptilian, and mammalian ancestors. The study of his mind no less clearly reveals his animal past. Remains of several species of the genus *homo* have been excavated during the last half-century, and the oldest are indubitably the most simian. There was no Garden of Eden. Nor was there a Fall. The eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil signifies the dawn of moral consciousness, the power of evaluating

and shaping destiny deliberately; it is the emergence from the pre-human, not a descent from the Age of the Gods. In "the dark backward and abysm of time" we confront the shambling figure of pithecanthropus, not a splendid Adam by whose side walked a beautiful naked Eve, the evolution of his rib, which the Creator extracted from his side during a miraculous sleep. While some Catholic anthropologists, like Father Humphreys, accept the idea of man's physical development from a simian stock, reserving for his soul a supernatural origin, all Catholics, under pain of excommunication, must believe, or at any rate not deny, the ridiculous rib-made-into-woman story. The First Adam being a myth, the Second Adam of the Pauline dialectic becomes equally mythical. No eating of forbidden fruit "brought death into the world and all our woe." Millions of years before man was on the earth there flourished

"dragons of the prime  
That tare each other in their slime."

Evolution, whether of stars or of living creatures, is unceasing, and life and death are the shuttles of its tireless loom.

The Biblical chronology, as calculated by Archbishop Ussher and placed in the margin of the Authorized Version, is not indeed held to be inspired. It is, however, based on data supplied by the Bible itself. Between Adam and Abraham a complete genealogical tree has been constructed in the Book of Genesis, and of every human link it is recorded at what age he begat offspring and at what age he died. Corruptions have certainly crept into the text, for the Masoretic, Samaritan, and Septuagint versions are at variance as to the figures. But, manipulate and re-interpret the data how you will, the fact remains that from six to eight thousand years is the furthest exten-



sion of time admissible for human history, if one sticks to the Bible as a completely reliable guide on such matters. A vast mass of facts, geological, ethnographical, and philological, go to prove that the antiquity of man as a tool-using animal must embrace hundreds of thousands, perhaps even a million years or more. But to admit this is to shatter the very framework of the Biblical narrative. To say that chronological error as far-reaching as this need not make us sceptical about the alleged events, whose credibility has the same documentary support, is like denying the relevance of its chronological accuracy to English history as a whole. Whether William the Norman conquered England in 1066, or a few years earlier or later, matters comparatively little. But if documents claiming to be trustworthy erred as to this date by a hundred years, not to speak of a thousand, who would not put such testimony on one side, believing no statement about the conquest that could not be corroborated from better sources?

The Noachian deluge has been proved an impossibility by scientific research, although reminiscences of an extensive flooding of Lower Mesopotamia in remote historic times appear to have been the source of the myth. Even before the rise of modern science the absurdities of the story should have been apparent to a mind free from theological prejudices. Over a million species of animals, birds, and insects are now known; but even the few hundred or the few thousand familiar to the authors of the Deluge narratives (there are two) or to their contemporaries could not have been looked after by eight people in a tempest-tossed ark, fitted with only one window and one door. How were insects collected and provided for? And did Noah gather bees and termites into his ark by pairs? What about the fish? All the fresh-water fish would have perished when the sea

rushed into the beds of the rivers. How were their species continued? Vegetation would have been utterly destroyed beneath the immense weight of water. And yet so delicate a growth as the olive-tree is found to be flourishing when the Flood has subsided.

Geological research has shown that no deluge has ever drowned the world. Referring to the cones of extinct volcanoes of Auvergne, consisting of loose ashes, Lyell writes: "Had the waters once risen, even for a day, so high as to reach the level of the base of one of these cones—had there been a single flood fifty or sixty feet in height since the last eruption occurred—a great part of the volcanoes must have inevitably been swept away."<sup>1</sup> The last eruption occurred long before the time of man.

Some apologists argue that, inasmuch as the Deluge was sent as a punishment of human wickedness, we need not take too literally the statement that the world was drowned. But if, as we are told, all the mountains were covered, including Mount Ararat, which is 17,000 feet high (Gen. vii, 19, and viii, 4), the Deluge must have been universal.

Is it credible that the fauna of the globe were distributed from Mount Ararat some four or five thousand years ago? How did the kangaroo reach Australia, which has been an island from remote geological times? And why do we find no trace of this species anywhere else? How did polar bears make their way to the Arctic Circle, lions to Africa, tigers to India and China, the American sloth to the continent it now inhabits and where, judging by palaeontological research, it was evolved many ages ago (this animal moves at the rate of a mile in three months).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Antiquity of Man*, p. 192.

<sup>2</sup> See *Bible Romances*, p. 60, by G. W. Foote.

What of the many races of mankind? Are they all descended from Shem, Ham, and Japhet? Since the days of the Pharaohs the Negro has retained his peculiar features unchanged. How long did he take to acquire them? The Wadjak skull of Java and the Talgai skull of Australia show many affinities with those of the existing Australian aborigines. The Boskop skull of South Africa is Proto-Bushman. These fossil skulls prove that races still extant have persisted for a much longer period than that which is said to have elapsed since the days of Noah.

## CHAPTER V

### THE EVOLUTION OF THE IDEA OF GOD

THE idea has grown from savage beginnings, and it seems that the primitive human brain (and primitives continually crop up even in civilized countries) cannot fail to animize—to endow with quasi-human will and intelligence, often with bodily form—the forces it but dimly apprehends. Dream fantasies, hallucinations, subconscious urges, terrors exploited by priests and magicians, wish-fulfilments, moral idealism clad in poetry, mystical experiences, and metaphysical speculations have shaped the vast pantheon that enshrines alike the nobility and the poltroonery of man.

Even if we agree with Father Schmidt, and a few other anthropologists of repute, that the “High Gods” and the “All Fathers” of certain savage peoples were evolved independently of the belief in ghosts and elemental demons, these alleged exalted beings are only crude sketches of the Creator as Christianity or Islam conceives him; no hypothesis of a supernatural revelation is necessary to explain them. Some of these “High Gods” may have arisen by way of answering the question, “Who made everything, including the ghosts and the spirits?” Others, like the Daramulun and Baiame of certain Australian tribes, of whom very gross anthropomorphic stories are told, may be mythical ancestors, who long ago left the earth for the sky; they see everything from so great a height and are naturally interested in morality, the morality of their children they have left behind. The Zulu Unkulunkulu (“The Old Old One”) is clearly such an ancestor. A distinguished anthropolo-

gist, Mr. R. R. Marett, is of the opinion that Australian "High Gods" or "All Fathers" are personifications of the stone whirled on a string which is known as the *churinga* ("bull-roarer"), in the initiatory rite for adolescent boys.<sup>1</sup> Colouring by the teaching of Christian and Muslim missionaries should also be taken into account when studying the gods of primitive folk. In ancient China, and elsewhere, the sky was personified and could not then fail to be regarded as omniscient and supreme. No people has been found without animistic ideas, and monotheistic religions nearly always shelter polytheistic practices and superstitions.

The God of the earlier books of the Old Testament, which have received many accretions and modifications, is, in Matthew Arnold's phrase, "a magnified and non-natural man." He is wifeless and childless, but lives up in the sky with other beings inferior to himself, who are also named gods (*elohim*, Ex. xv, 11; Ps. lxxxvi, 8; Ps. xcvi, 9). Sometimes he walks about the earth to enjoy the cool evening (Gen. iii, 8), descends to verify rumours he has heard (Gen. xi, 5; xviii, 20, 21), eats and drinks with Bedouin sheiks and argues with their wives (Gen. xviii, 1-15), gets the worst of it in a wrestling match until he practises a foul trick on his opponent (Gen. xxxii, 24-30), tries to kill a man at an inn because he has not circumcised his son (Ex. iv, 24-26), shows his back to Moses because his face is death-dealing (Ex. xxxiii, 20-23), is dissuaded from yielding to vengeance by an appeal to his vanity and pride (Ex. xxxii, 10-14), buries the corpse of Moses with his own hands (Deut. xxxiv, 6), enjoys wine-drinking (Jud. ix, 13), is angry (Ex. iv, 14; Josh. vii, 26), jealous (Ex. xx, 5), revengeful (Deut. xxxii, 42), and regrets what he has done or intended to do (Gen. vi, 6; Ex. xxxii, 14). It is true that some

<sup>1</sup> *The Threshold of Religion*, pp. 145-168.

of these texts were penned when less crudely anthropomorphic conceptions of God had been reached by the deeper minds, and we must allow for a tendency on the part of such occasionally to revert to a more primitive way of thinking. But enough is said to indicate that the Hebrew god, like the gods of other peoples, was long credited with many human weaknesses and limitations. Mystical interpretations are the product of a later age. So Jacob's wrestling match at Peniel is explained as wrestling in prayer, although his divine antagonist strains the hollow of the Patriarch's thigh.

How far removed is the Yahweh of the ancient Hebrews from the "Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning" (James i, 17), and from the Johannine God who is pure "spirit," "light," and "love" ! The God of Philo of Alexandria's theology is beyond all finite categories. Hence the need of the mediating Logos who figures so much in Philo's system of thought. We are here brought nearer to the subtleties of Hindu metaphysics, as illustrated by the Upanishads and Śāṅkara's Vedantism, and to the rigidly articulated logic of Spinoza's philosophy of the double-faced infinite substance. In the philosophy of Spinoza, the great Jew "of whom the world was not worthy," the evolution of the idea of God would seem to have reached its goal; but the God that emerges is beyond personality and "beyond good and evil" (to use Nietzsche's phrase)—a God for the contemplation of the mystic, but not a God to whom one can pray and whom one can passionately love, neither a Father nor a Judge. Atheism, whose truth or falsehood does not concern us here, dispenses with every idea of God as irrelevant and unnecessary to such provisional cosmologies and ethical systems as are possible to man's very limited mind.

Despite the efforts of redactors and manipulators of documents to disguise the fact, there can be no reasonable doubt that the ancient Hebrews believed in the reality of the gods of the nations around them. Melkarth, Ashur, and Chemosh were Elohim, albeit Elohim hostile to Yahweh. "A great king above all Elohim." "Who among the Elohim is like unto thee, O Yahweh?" These texts from the Psalms, if composed at a late date, point to a polytheistic current even in the thought of professed monotheists.

"Elohim" means strictly "gods" or "mighty ones"; but it could have a singular meaning. "Elohim" was a name bestowed even on the ghosts of the dead, who were also known as the "Rephaim" (1 Sam. xxviii, 13). The latter name was originally that of a fabled race of wicked giants, whom Yahweh hurled down to the underworld. At an early date the angels became known as "Elohim" or "Beni-Elohim" (Sons of Elohim). Under Zoroastrian influence they were later graded in a complicated hierarchy. Polytheism peeps out of such texts as Gen. iii, 22: "the man is become *as one of us*, to know good and evil." Orthodox theology absurdly interprets this as an observation of God the Father to the two other members of the Trinity.

Jephthah's reference to Chemosh, the God of the Moabites, implies that he is as real a being as Yahweh. "Will not thou possess that which Chemosh thy god giveth thee to possess? So whomsoever Yahweh our god hath dispossessed from before us, them will we possess" (Jud. xi, 24). David's fellow-countrymen thrust him out of his homeland with the taunt, "Go, serve other gods" (1 Sam. xxvi, 19), implying that for them Yahweh was but a super-human potentate, whose authority was coterminous with the territory of the Beni-Israel. When Naaman wishes to show his gratitude to Yahweh for curing his leprosy he

asks Elisha to let him have "two mules' burden of earth" (2 Kings v, 17) to carry back with him to Syria. The meaning of this is that only on Yahweh's soil can an altar be lawfully raised for offering him sacrifice. On the soil of Rimmon sacrifice must be offered to Rimmon, not to the god of a foreign and often hostile people.

How did the Jews attain to Monotheism? External stimulus is not likely to have occurred, at any rate on any considerable scale, until a late period. Before the time of Cyrus Zoroastrianism had no contact, so far as we know, with Hebrew religion and ethic, and monotheistic or pantheistic speculations among the Egyptians and the Babylonians would be confined to small circles of priests and sages, though perhaps here and there a travelled Israelite might have become aware of such. The recognition of a creator god is not necessarily monotheistic. For the Babylonians of the time of Nebuchadnezzar, and earlier, Marduk was the Creator; but this did not check the cults of the many gods and goddesses of the Babylonians.

The worship of alien deities, like Melkarth or Tammuz, was felt by many Israelites to be disloyal to Yahweh; it was like an Englishman combining a salute to the Union Jack with obeisance to a portrait of the Mikado. Conquering monarchs do not mind collecting foreign gods in an imperial pantheon; but this is because different peoples of different languages and cultures obey their sway, and it is always politic not to annoy a deity who may stir up trouble. Inferior spirits may receive a measure of worship which does not insult the national god. To such a category belong the *tērāphim*, mentioned in a number of Old Testament texts. David had *tērāphim* in his house (1 Sam. xix, 13), and Hosea reckons the loss of the *tērāphim* as among the calamities that Yahweh would send the Israelites as a punishment for their sins



(Hos. iii, 4). The *tērāphim* may have been images of human shape ; but it is more doubtful whether they were meant to represent ancestral spirits. The general view is that they were tutelary divinities, like the Roman *lares*.

The return from the Babylonian Exile naturally ended the cults of strange gods or else drove them into holes and corners. The ruin of their land, and the overthrow of its ancient polity and the centre of its religion by Nebuchadnezzar, had fostered a passionate patriotism among large numbers of the exiled Jews, and this meant, under the then cultural conditions, a more fervent attachment to the national god. Yahweh would henceforth tolerate no rivals. He must reign the undisputed monarch of his people's hearts. This was not Monotheism ; but the Jewish hierarchy, whose prestige and privileges were enhanced by the new popular temper, would favour monotheistic ideas as soon as they penetrated its sphere of culture. Curiously enough, the Jewish colony at Yeb, in Egypt, practised polytheism as late as the fifth century before Christ, and yet were in friendly touch for some time with their brethren in Jerusalem. Yahweh was the chief god of the temple at Yeb ; but he shared his honours with two or three other deities, including a goddess Anath, who would seem to have been a kind of feminine counterpart of Yahweh, analogous to the goddesses of other Semitic cults. The knowledge of these startling facts is due to one of the most remarkable of modern archaeological discoveries, that of a number of Aramaic documents, at Elephantiné (Yeb), an island in the Nile near the present Assouan Dam ; all these documents belonged to members of the Jewish community above mentioned.

Towards the end of the exilian period the Biblical critics are now agreed to place the noble rhetoric of

the "Second Isaiah," a contemporary of Cyrus the Great, whom he actually names. Here we find an uncompromising denunciation of polytheism and idolatry. "To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like? Such as lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, they hire a goldsmith, and he maketh it a god; they fall down, yea, they worship. They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place, and he standeth; from his place shall he not remove; yea, one shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble" (Is. xlv, 5-7). Unless the opinion of most critics is mistaken, there were some pre-exilian denouncers of idolatry. For Hosea "the calf of Samaria," although worshipped as a form of Yahweh, is not divine, for "the workman made it" (Hos. viii, 6). This is a decided advance on the attitude of the earlier Prophets of Israel. Elijah and Elisha could not have objected to the calf worship set up, or more probably given recognition, by Jeroboam when he established the Northern Kingdom. Otherwise their opposition would have been recorded in the Book of Kings. Their hostility was reserved for the foreign cult of Melkarth, the Phoenician Baal, the god introduced by Queen Jezebel on her marriage to Ahab.

"For all the gods of the peoples are idols; but Yahweh made the heavens" (Ps. xcvi, 5) is a conception very difficult to reach in a polytheistic environment and requires a high order of speculative insight. The thinker who attains to the idea of a single providence must also be an inspirer and leader of men if he would make the gods give way to God. Nor must we lose sight of the fact that a convergence of political and economic forces is indispensable to the success of his mission. Of such geniuses Muhammad is the one who has exercised most influence over mankind.

As an illustration of how the would-be monotheistic reformer is frustrated by the circumstances of his age one may cite the case of Amen-hotep IV, who was almost the last monarch of the eighteenth Egyptian dynasty. Like Josiah, King of Judah, he resolved to establish, both by propaganda and violence, the worship of a single deity. The visible image of this god was the solar disc (*aten*). In honour of him Amen-hotep IV changed his name to Akhnaten ("Glory of the Aten"). Sayce summarizes his creed as follows: "All other gods are false, and the followers of Aten-Ra were accordingly called upon to overthrow their worship and convert their worshippers. At the same time the Aten was the father of all things; he called all things into existence by the word of his mouth, men equally with beasts and birds, the flowers and the far-off heaven itself. If, therefore, men refused to worship him, it was because they had been led astray by falsehood and ignorance, or else were wilfully blind."<sup>1</sup>

The collapse of the cult of Aten-Ra was due to the opposition of the powerful hierarchy of Thebes, whose cult of Amen was threatened with extinction. The reformation of Josiah survived his death because, in that case, the initiative came from the priesthood, whose more disinterested motives were in harmony with their economic bias. There is no more reason to attribute a monotheistic instinct to the Hebrews or other Semites than a polytheistic bias to the Egyptians. Ideas are not biological reactions, determined by heredity; they are the result of the total complex of cultural and economic forces of a given environment. Polytheism is really organized Animism, which is the primary human tendency, and no advance in religion has yet been able to eradicate it. Monotheism is always the exception and the outcome of special conditions.

<sup>1</sup> *The Religions of Ancient Egypt and Babylonia*, p. 97.

The God of the Beni-Israel, who brought them out of the land of Egypt, is known in the Authorized Version as "The Lord," which is the literal translation of the Greek *Ho Kurios* in the Septuagint. The authors of the Septuagint, dominated by superstitious scruples, avoided nearly all mention of the divine name, which appears in the Massoretic text under the consonants YHWH. When, at a late period, the system of vowel-points was invented and found its way into Hebrew manuscripts, YHWH was pointed as though it was ADONAI ("My Lord"). The reader in the synagogue was expected to refrain from uttering the former word, whose pronunciation was perhaps almost forgotten, and to substitute ADONAI. This strange custom misled the scholars of the Renaissance into thinking that YHWH should be pronounced Ye(a)HoV(W)aH, and in England the Y was turned into a J. The original pronunciation of YHWH seems to have been YAHWEH; YAH and YAHU were variants of this name. YAHU enters into several names appearing in the Bible or elsewhere, *e.g.* Eliyahu ("My God (is) Yahu") and Yahumelek ("Yahu (is) king"). There is mention of a god Ia-u, perhaps identical with Yahu, on Assyrian cuneiform tablets. The Hebrew taboo on the pronunciation of the name of their god has many parallels throughout the world.

According to Ex. iii, 14, Yahweh manifested himself to Moses from the midst of a burning bush during the future leader's sojourn in the land of Midian, and said to him "I am that I am." Theologians have read into these words an abstruse metaphysical meaning. The God of Israel is thought to have announced himself as the Absolute, of which we can say nothing except that it exists. Thomas Aquinas declares that even existence cannot be affirmed univocally of God and creatures. Perhaps the Fourth Evangelist had some

such high mysticism in his mind when he made Jesus tell the scornful Jews "Before Abraham was I am" (John viii, 58). But none of the writers of the Pentateuch were mystics. The sentence in Exodus above cited would be more correctly rendered "I will be that I will be";<sup>1</sup> these words appear to be an interpretation of the name of the God of Israel. But the root of his name "is quite uncertain . . . the word has been variously identified as one meaning 'to be,' 'to blow,' 'to fall,'"<sup>2</sup> Yahweh proclaims himself to Moses a heavenly autocrat, and not the "Unknowable" of Herbert Spencer nor the "Brahman" of Śankaracharya.

<sup>1</sup> *Exodus*, p. 23 (Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges).

<sup>2</sup> *A History of Israel*, Vol. I, p. 93, by T. H. Robinson.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE LOWER CRITICISM

THE Lower Criticism is a term used by scholars to distinguish the problem of discovering, so far as is possible, the actual text of the Biblical documents as it left the hands of its authors, from questions of authenticity, mode of composition, interpretation, historical value, etc., which constitute what is known as the Higher Criticism. The Lower Criticism is generally acknowledged by the orthodox to be legitimate, though Burgon was furious with Westcott and Hort, scholars as orthodox and as competent as himself, for reconstructing the text of the New Testament on lines he condemned as sacrilegious, and many, both learned and unlearned, have displayed the same bigotry. The Higher Criticism has taken a longer time than the Lower to acquire right of city, and is still widely denounced as sheer blasphemy. Ignorant people equate criticism with fault-finding. In common parlance "don't be so critical" is a form of reproach. A critic is a judge. Fault-finding may be involved in his procedure; that depends on his data. Judicious praise is as integral to criticism as blame. If Biblical criticism is sinful, then Pusey and Westcott were as guilty as Driver and Baur, for to defend by argument the traditional authorship and the historical character of the Book of Daniel and the Fourth Gospel is no less critical than to use argument to throw doubt on these things.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE HIGHER CRITICISM

It is hardly possible to draw the line exactly between the Lower and the Higher Criticism. If, as most of the Higher Critics contend, many of the books of the Old Testament, and perhaps some of the New, have grown by way of much edited accretions to comparatively short documents, one may feel puzzled to say what is meant by the original text. The Lower Critic has decided that the story of the woman taken in adultery did not belong to the earliest edition of the Fourth Gospel. A careful study of the Septuagint has convinced many Biblical scholars that the last six chapters of Exodus were added to the Hebrew text after the Greek version of the Pentateuch, commissioned by Ptolemy Philadelphus, King of Egypt, had been put into circulation. The Greek rendering of these chapters betrays itself as the work of men quite different from those responsible for the translation begun about 250 B.C., and they were probably added half a century later. The Higher Critic simply carries his scrutiny of the text further than the Lower Critic, and uses other criteria besides variant manuscript readings. Having done as much as is possible in this respect, he goes on to discover all he can about the origin and value of the documents with which he is concerned. So long as he is true to those principles of criticism that are deemed valid in all other fields of documentary research, he is entitled to be called a Higher Critic, whether he adheres to or departs from traditional opinions. Finality of judgment he seldom or never hopes to reach, except to rule out certain solutions.

The expression "Higher Criticism" first occurs, so far as is known, in the German scholar Eichhorn's *Introduction to the Old Testament* (pub. 1780); he calls it "a new name to no humanist." Germany has produced so many critical students of the Bible that the Higher Criticism has come to be looked on by many as a German invention, and so has incurred the odium that two wars and the Nazi revolution have attached to everything German. In the first World War a London magazine bore an illustration of the burned library of Louvain University, with the letterpress "The Fruit of the Higher Criticism." It is charitable to believe that the poor fellow who perpetrated this nonsense knew as little of the Higher Criticism as the egregious "Billy Sunday," ex-baseball-player and evangelist, who raged at it as a kind of lecherous snake, "wriggling its dirty, filthy, stinking carcase out of a beer-mug in Leipzig or Heidelberg."<sup>1</sup>

The Higher Criticism of the Bible may be said to go back to the early ages of Christianity. Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, in the third century of our era, showed himself a Higher Critic when he decided, on grounds of style, that the Fourth Gospel and the Revelation could not have had the same author; it was traditional prejudice that made him attribute the former to John the Son of Zebedee. The question of the authenticity of a book generally accepted as sacred or of its right to be in the Canon turned for him entirely on whether its spirit and its teaching harmonised with what he conceived to be true Christianity.

Biblical criticism of a more scientific character would seem to have been practised by the Neo-Platonist philosopher Porphyry, who flourished in the same century as Dionysius of Alexandria. Porphyry antici-

<sup>1</sup> For a lively account of this energumen see Upton Sinclair's amusing book, *The Profits of Religion*.



pated the opinion of the majority of modern critics that the Book of Daniel was not the work of that Prophet, but was composed about B.C. 165. So far as we can gather from the scanty notices in the works of his Christian opponents he advanced arguments that are still thought valid.

Origen and other Christian Fathers, like the Jewish philosopher Philo before them, favoured an allegorization of many Biblical narratives, whose acceptance as historical fact created serious difficulties for the intellect or the moral sense. But the slight critical sense exhibited in these performances was largely nullified by a mystical attitude towards the documents that were so handled. A few of the Fathers were prepared to admit the existence of trifling errors in the sacred writings. But the opinion that finally prevailed, and has dominated both Catholic and Protestant thought down to our own times, was that of the great Augustine of Hippo: "To these books which are already styled canonical I have learned to pay such reverence and honour as most firmly to believe that none of their authors has committed any error in writing. If in that literature I meet with anything which seems contrary to truth, I will have no doubt that it is only the manuscript which is faulty, and the translator who has not hit the sense, or my own failure to understand."

Gleams of critical discernment appear in the Talmud; but most of the Jews were as mentally prostrate before their Holy Scriptures as the Christians before theirs. A medieval Jewish commentator, Ibn Ezra (d. 1167), when citing such texts as "the Canaanite was then in the land" (Gen. xii, 6), mysteriously hinted that the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch could not be accepted without qualification. For this dire blasphemy one of his co-religionists was led to remark: "May melted gold be poured into his mouth!"

At the dawn of the Reformation the voice of the Biblical critic is sometimes faintly heard in Protestant circles. Luther dealt drastically with the Canon. He despised Esther and would fain have tossed the book into the Elbe. The Epistle of James he dubbed "an epistle of straw" (*epistola straminea*). Even the Synoptic Gospels he did not rate very high. In his eyes the Epistles of Paul and the Fourth Gospel were the cream of the New Testament, and he judged the rest of its contents by their standard. We can hardly dignify these emotional judgments with the name of criticism. But Luther's denial of the Solomonic authorship of Ecclesiastes—a denial shared by practically every Biblical scholar to-day—makes him, to that extent, a Higher Critic.

Calvin, a systematic and logical thinker, which Luther was not, showed himself less bold than the German Reformer. The Catholic Canon of the New Testament he accepted without qualification. From the Canon of the Old Testament he expunged, like most Protestants, those books that Catholics term "Deutero-canonical" (1 and 2 Maccabees, Judith, Tobit, etc.). The ground on which the Deutero-canonical books were decanonised was their rejection by the Palestinian Jews. Calvin showed real critical insight in assigning Psalms xlv and lxxiv to the age of the Maccabees, and he admitted that this was possibly true of Psalm lxxix.

In the seventeenth century the lines of modern Biblical criticism begin to emerge. Spinoza in his *Theologico-Politicus Tractatus*, and Thomas Hobbes in his *Leviathan*, drew attention to a considerable number of passages in the Pentateuch which could not, without absurdity, be attributed to Moses, and thereby threw doubt on the whole tradition of its Mosaic authorship. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the celebrated English scholar Richard Bentley had reached

the conviction that the Book of Daniel was much later than the time of its alleged author. The greatest name in the history of Biblical Criticism, so far as the seventeenth century is concerned, is that of the French Oratorian Richard Simon. In 1678 Simon published a *Critical History of the Old Testament*, which was suppressed through the influence of Bossuet, Bishop of Meaux, the greatest Catholic theologian of his age, but was republished seven years later at Rotterdam. With Simon begins the documentary analysis of the Pentateuch, which was carried much further by the French physician Astruc, over fifty years later. Both these critics professed belief in the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, but maintained that Moses must have incorporated older documents in his work, as there are clearly two stories of the Creation and two of the Flood, differing in a number of particulars.

In the eighteenth century important progress was made in the criticism of both the Old and the New Testaments. The last century witnessed a still greater development of this science, which to-day, in conjunction with archaeology and other illuminative studies, has become highly specialised. To the drastic revolution it entails in traditional views about the Bible the greater part of the public, literate as well as illiterate, seems increasingly indifferent. Under the searchlight of criticism the Old Testament resolves itself into a vast fabrication of tendentious documents, largely anonymous or pseudonymous, with a text frequently corrupt or obscure. Myth and legend are admitted to play a large role in its pages. The New Testament has fared less badly at the hands of the majority of critics, who, in several instances, accept the traditional authorship of the documents and assign fairly early dates. Tradition, however, is discounted on many points, and the reality of the miracles re-

corded becomes at least questionable. There is a left-wing school which rejects the traditional authorship of every book of the New Testament and places the whole of it in the second century. Among fairly conservative critics professed Rationalists, like F. C. Conybeare, as well as Christians, are to be found.

The existence of rival schools of critics, and of very marked divergencies of opinion among scholars on the dating, mode of composition, and historical value of the different books of the Bible, may well bewilder the ordinary man and induce him to believe that perhaps the Fundamentalists are right in dismissing all Biblical criticism as a mass of arbitrary speculations. Critics are not, it is true, in perfect agreement on all points; but if this fact discounts the value of Biblical criticism, it discounts the value of all criticism whatsoever. The Fundamentalists, while stressing every extravagance put forward in the name of criticism as typical of all critical procedure, shut their eyes to the large measure of agreement among critics of different schools, no less than to the overwhelming evidence against many, at any rate, of the traditional views about the Bible.

Let us consider briefly the main conclusions at which the majority of the Higher Critics have now arrived. The Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) is a composite work, covering a period of many centuries. If any part of it emanates from Moses, whose historicity seems probable, though it is widely disputed—and very few critics think he had a hand in its authorship—that part is not now distinguishable from the rest.<sup>1</sup> *In its present form* the Pentateuch dates from the fifth century before Christ, or even later. The whole of

<sup>1</sup> The Ten Commandments, *in their original form*, may have come from Moses; of this code two versions exist (Ex. xx. 2-17 and Deut. v, 6-21).

the Book of Leviticus, and large parts of Genesis, Exodus, and Numbers (very little of Deuteronomy) were penned by Hebrew priests in Babylon or Jerusalem, who falsified the story of Hebrew origins and attributed to Moses (or rather to God using Moses as his go-between) a mass of social and religious legislation, partly of ancient and partly of recent date. The Book of Deuteronomy was the "Book of the Law" which Hilkiah the High Priest found in the Temple in the year 621 B.C., when Josiah was King of Judah (2 Kings xxii, 8); it could not have been Deuteronomy as we have it to-day, but only the substance of that book.<sup>1</sup> While most critics believe that the original Deuteronomy was composed by some unknown reformer, who wished to purify the Hebrew religion, not very long before Hilkiah discovered it, there are very able critics who think that large parts of this book may be a century or perhaps three or four centuries older than the school of Wellhausen, the dominant critical school, maintains. Other critics bring the whole of Deuteronomy down as late as the fifth century before Christ and hold that the story told in 2 Kings xxii is unhistorical, or else that the "Book of the Law" there mentioned was not Deuteronomy. A small but able school of critics, mostly French, regard the whole of the Pentateuch as a post-exilic composition, and a few critics paradoxically deny what is obvious to most critics—the diversity of authorship shown by the differences of style and by the discordancies of statement and view-point in the five "Mosaic" books. All, however, who admit the composite nature of the Pentateuch are agreed that Deuteronomy (D), barring a few interpolations, was in existence before the priestly additions above mentioned.

<sup>1</sup> Certain passages in Deuteronomy must have been written after the Exile, e.g. Deut. xxix, 28.

172 844. Q 6:21:9

There are two documents embedded in the Pentateuch which are earlier than D—that of the Jahvist or Yahwist (J), who wrote probably in the ninth century B.C., and that of the Elohist (E), who wrote in the following century. These dates, which are those assigned by Wellhausen and his school, are of course debatable, and some critics give the Elohist or even the Jahvist considerably later dates. A few critics have argued that E was not an independent document, but a revision of J, embodying variant traditions. J is not always self-consistent and may be composite.

While the whole of both P and D have been preserved, only fragments of J and E remain; these have been incorporated by a series of priestly writers into their late document (P). Whether P ever circulated as a separate work, without JE (the combination of J and E)—Deuteronomy was certainly independent at one time—may be regarded as still open to discussion, though most critics believe that it did. The Jahvist is so named because he usually calls the God of Israel “Jahveh” (“Yahweh”), while the Elohist does not employ this name before Ex. iii, 16, but speaks only of “Elohim” (“God” in the English version).

The hands of J, E, D, and P are also traceable, so it is generally held, in the Book of Joshua. Hence critics speak of the “Hexateuch” (“Six Books”), which implies that Joshua once formed a single work with the other five. There are some serious objections to this view, which need not be considered here. The JE book of legends may well have related events later than the Mosaic age—some think the compilers of the Books of Samuel and Kings made use of it—and the nucleus of the Book of Joshua is probably taken from this work. Scribes, influenced by D—not necessarily the Deuteronomist himself—

have edited Joshua, and one or more members of the P school have made further additions.

A few scholars deserving serious attention, *e.g.* Prof. James Orr, have argued that the Pentateuch is substantially the work of Moses, but they generally qualify this view by important concessions to the radical critics. Orr admits the Pentateuch's composite character, as well as the reality of the P document and its marked stylistic unlikeness to other sections.

All the historical books of the Old Testament are of composite authorship. Judges, Samuel, and Kings, *in their present forms*, belong to the period of the Exile. The first of these books has been edited by a member of the Deuteronomical school. The general picture drawn may be regarded as historical. The Book of Joshua falsely describes the conquest of Canaan as complete at the time of Joshua's death. The whole land is a *tabula rasa*, which is divided among the twelve tribes. All the Canaanites have been either slain or enslaved by the victorious Hebrews. An intelligent study of the Book of Judges proves that the conquest of Canaan was long and hard. For many generations the Beni-Israel occupied only the hill country, while the great plains and most of the cities remained in Canaanite possession. Jerusalem was a Jebusite fortress until the time of David, who captured it by a clever stratagem (2 Sam. v, 6-8).

The song of triumph over Sisera (Jud. v), wrongly ascribed to the Prophetess Deborah, is almost certainly a product of the times to which it refers, even if it has undergone some revision; its date would be about 1200 B.C., and it is therefore the oldest part of the Bible, with the possible exception of a few quotations from poems inserted in the Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua. A comparison of this song with Jud. iv, which narrates the same events, reveals two stories that conflict at certain points, and we should

prefer the contemporary poet to a later prose writer. The so-called "Judges" (*Shophetim*) were local champions, who, after freeing a Hebrew tribe or group of tribes from foreign oppressors, exercised temporary dictatorships. Samson (Heb. *Shimshon* = "Man of the Sun") is strangely included among the *Shophetim*. He is a legendary, perhaps wholly mythical figure, though probably not of solar origin, in spite of his name; one or two episodes in his saga may have been taken from solar mythology.

It is the Deuteronomical editor who makes the *Shophetim* rule "all Israel"; there was no national unity in the days of the Judges, which were characterized by tribal welter. The Pentateuch picture of such a unity is a late myth. The group of tribes led by Moses may have been called "Israel," but they were not a nation. The foundations of national unity seem to have been laid by Saul, the first real Hebrew king—we may ignore petty local monarchs, like Abimelech (Jud. ix)—and their champion against the Philistines ("Pelishtim"), an Aegean folk of high culture, who brought nearly the whole country under their sway, as is proved by the fact that Canaan (also known as "The Land of the Amorites") came to be named after them "Palestine" ("The Land of the Philistines"). Incongruous stories are told of Samuel, Saul, and David, the principal figures in the Book of Samuel; but it is unreasonable to doubt their historicity. For David's reign, at least, a contemporary record has been used.

The Books of Samuel and Kings, as we have noted, received their final redaction at a late period, though their compilers are indebted to much older documents. In the Book of Kings the general outline is certainly historical, and this applies to the names and the order of succession of the rulers of the two kingdoms into which the realm of Solomon was divided after



his death. The celebrated Moabite Stone, and the monuments of Assyria and Babylonia, have thrown a welcome light on the history of those times. To such valuable archaeological evidence we should add that obtained in Palestine itself, such as the discoveries made by Crowfoot on the site of Samaria, the Siloam Inscription,<sup>1</sup> and the Lachish correspondence. The chronology of the Book of Kings, however, has been discounted by the findings of archaeologists. A series of cuneiform tablets, covering the period 893–697 B.C., has served as a most reliable criterion of the dates assigned by the Hebrew compiler to events occurring between these two years. The tablets in question date everything they record by the terms of office of certain Assyrian functionaries (*limmu*), whose names are given; their accuracy can be further verified by their mention of eclipses, which an astronomer can always exactly calculate.

The Book of Chronicles is the work of an ecclesiastically minded writer, probably a priest, who rehandles his sources drastically (he reproduces many sections of the Book of Kings) and (according to modern standards) dishonestly, so as to give the impression that from the beginning of their history the Hebrews had known the Law of Moses, and that it was loyally obeyed by all good and pious persons, like King David. The Book of Chronicles was originally united to Ezra and Nehemiah, which form a single work in the Hebrew Canon. This is the general critical view; but at least one important Biblical scholar, Prof. A. C. Welch, disagrees. In the Book of Ezra–Nehemiah are incorporated genuine memoirs of those reformers; but much of the matter comes from the Chronicler, who has reshaped everything to suit his

<sup>1</sup> The inscription refers to the making of a conduit to bring water into Jerusalem, and this achievement seems to be mentioned in 2 Kings xx, 20.

conception of the past. The Chronicler (or perhaps a redactor) has made Ezra a contemporary of Nehemiah, which, according to Dr. W. O. E. Oesterley, is incorrect, Ezra having reached Jerusalem in the year 397 B.C., nearly fifty years after Nehemiah, not in the year 458 B.C. (the date usually given). The Chronicler appears to have written as late as about 300 B.C., or perhaps even later. Torrey is among the very few critics who question the historicity of Ezra. But what was the motive of inventing such a prosaic figure, who never appears in a romantic or miraculous context so far as the Old Testament is concerned?

The works of the Hebrew Prophets are not wholly the composition of the men whose names they bear. The writings of at least three men, the first of whom is the historic Isaiah, are incorporated in the book named after that Prophet. The composition of the Book of Isaiah appears to cover a period extending from the eighth to the third century before Christ. The sections describing the ideal figure of the "Servant of Yahweh" (Is. liii) are not the work of the contemporary of King Hezekiah; they were written in the exilic or post-exilic age, although possibly not by the so-called "Second Isaiah," to whom we owe most of Is. xl-lv.

The Book of Jeremiah is also composite; it very probably contains many of the oracles of Jeremiah, set down at the time in writing by himself or his disciple Baruch, but was not compiled until after the Prophet's death and has received many accretions from unknown authors. Jeremiah was a courageous and far-seeing statesman, whom most of his contemporaries regarded as a Quisling because he told them unpleasant truths; he condemned the pro-Egyptian policy of the King and urged submission to Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, who was threatening Jerusalem and finally took it (586 B.C.), destroy-

ing the Temple and bringing the Davidic monarchy to an end.

How far Ezekiel is responsible for the book named after him is a moot point in critical circles. Until recent years this book was regarded by practically all critics as a unity; but critical opinion inclines more and more to dispute this. At least two authors are surmised, and part of the book is attributed by some critics to a period earlier than the traditional Ezekiel. Josephus mysteriously states that Ezekiel wrote two books.

The collection, forming a single scroll in the Hebrew text, of the works of the twelve so-called "Minor Prophets," consists in part of their oracles, probably written down by themselves, with the exception of the Book of Jonah, which is a romance about that Prophet (see 2 Kings xiv, 25), but was certainly not composed by him. All of these books have received a number of accretions. Thus Zech. i-viii is the work of its reputed author, who lived in the second half of the sixth century before Christ. Zech. ix-xiv, however, is a much later document, perhaps as late as the Maccabean age (second century before Christ). Havet is perhaps the only critic to assign the whole of the Hebrew prophetic literature to this period. The fact that Ben Sirach, the author of Ecclesiasticus (about 180 B.C.), includes Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, as well as "The Twelve," in his praise of famous men (Eccles. xlv-l) affords sufficient refutation of such an extravagance. A minority of critics (Dujardin, d'Eichthal, etc.) regard all the prophetic works as post-exilian, Jeremiah being the earliest (end of the fifth century B.C.), though they do not favour the very late dating for which Havet argued.

The Book of Jonah was written about 350 B.C. or perhaps later. The story it tells is full of absurdities; but the lessons of mercy and compassion taught in this little book give it a very high ethical value.

The Canon of the Hebrew Prophets contains some of the most exalted literature mankind has produced, and many of its pages are afire with hatred of oppression and injustice. Gorgeous imagery abounds. Many of its word-pictures have passed into current speech, e.g. "they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind" (Hos. viii, 7). Yahweh becomes the mouthpiece of the downtrodden. The vision of a world at peace, with swords beaten into ploughshares, charms our spirits, which have been ruffled by the same seers with forecasts of terror and desolation. The whole gamut of human emotions—rage, pity, exultant hatred, yearning love—is brought into play as upon some splendid organ. The Prophets show great inequalities of literary power. From the sublimities of Isaiah to Zechariah's feeble and sometimes ludicrous apocalyptic fantasies what a descent! Haggai, a priestly pedant, is more disturbed by Jewish slackness in rebuilding the Temple than by the grinding of the faces of the poor. In marked contrast, Jeremiah despises the whole system of sacrifices, which he says Yahweh never commanded, and foretells a new pact between Israel and her god—a pact not written on stone or papyrus, but in the people's hearts.

The *Kethubim* (the Books of the Third Canon) are all late, though early material may be incorporated in some of them.

Ruth is a novelette, composed long after the period of the Judges in which its charming tale of loyalty and kindness is set. Sympathy with the generally hated Moabites inspires the unknown author.

The so-called Song of Solomon is not a religious poem, allegorizing either Yahweh and Israel, or Christ and the Church, under the imagery of a Hebrew "lover and his lass," nor is it the work of the Third King of Israel, a selfish and uxorious

Sultan, who made his subjects groan under his *corvées*. It is a collection of bridal songs, probably all late in their present form. According to Rabbinic tradition, Jews sang these songs in taverns, and only after much dispute was the book admitted into the Canon.

*Ecclesiastes* (Heb. *Koheleth*) is the work of a cynical pessimist, composed about 200 B.C. God is believed in, but not loved. Man should be neither wicked nor over-righteous. Wench and wine while you can, because death ends everything. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." This is the burden of the argument of this Hebrew Omar Khayyám, whose blasphemies contrast with the few pious tags added by a shocked scribe at the end of the book; there appear to be other interpolations. The influence, probably indirect, of various Greek sages, e.g. Theognis, has been not unreasonably suspected.<sup>1</sup> The author poses as Solomon. His kingship is alluded to as an event in the past (Eccl. i, 12), the author evidently following the Rabbinic legend that Solomon abdicated towards the end of his life and wandered about as a beggar until his death. *Koheleth* is translated "Preacher" in the English version, here following the Septuagint; but its meaning is very doubtful.

Lamentations was never written by Jeremiah; it is a collection of five poems, the first four of which are acrostics. Chaps. i-iv belong to the period of the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (586 B.C.), while chap. v may date more than a century later.

The Book of Esther, which may be a work of the third century before Christ, is a fiercely patriotic romance, and it is doubtful whether any of the characters in it, except the Persian king, Ahasuerus (Xerxes), are historical.

<sup>1</sup> See H. Ranston's *Ecclesiastes and the Early Greek Wisdom Literature*.

Esther has been equated by some students with Ishtar, the Babylonian Goddess of Love, and Mordecai with the chief Babylonian god Marduk, while Vashti and Haman have been regarded as euhemerizations of the Elamite deities Washti and Humban. These transformations of gods into mortals were made, if they ever were made, before the author of this book framed his tale; how much of the story originated with him we cannot say. The Book of Esther did not become canonical before the second century of our era.

The Book of Psalms consists of five collections of hymns, mostly written for use in the second temple (the temple of Zerubbabel). Though very old poems may have been adapted in several instances, these collections appear to be wholly, or almost wholly, post-exilian. Probably none of the psalms should be ascribed to David. Several of them, praising some highly idealized monarch, would seem to have been written in honour of one or other of the Hasmonean kings (the short-lived dynasty that lasted from the second century B.C. until the Roman conquest of Palestine). Striking parallels can be adduced from Babylonian and Egyptian literature; but no finer collection of hymns has been bequeathed to us by the ancient world.

The Book of Proverbs is composite, like the Book of Psalms. Solomon may have been the author of a few of the maxims in it, though his traditional wisdom may have been quite imaginary, that monarch having been confused with some ancient god of wisdom bearing a similar name. Provs. xxii, 17-xxiv, 22 is now held to be an adaptation from a book of maxims by the Egyptian sage Amen-em-ope (eighth century B.C.?). Other proverbs closely recall the maxims of the still older Egyptian sage Ptah-hotep, and others again those of the Babylonian sage Ahikar, who was in high repute among the Jews.

The Book of Job—one of the greatest literary achievements in the world—was not written by Moses, as Rabbinical fancy opined, but by an unknown thinker of the early post-exilic period, who resolved to discuss in dramatic form the problem of why the good man suffers so often, while the wicked flourish so often in comfort. Perhaps this book is an adaptation from a lost Edomite work. Sayce thought it was an Edomite work. The Bible tells us of the proverbial wisdom of the Edomites. One of Job's friends is Eliphaz of Teman (in Edom). The Book of Job has been much interpolated. The speeches of Elihu, who does not appear among Job's friends at the beginning of the work and is never introduced to us, are almost certainly due to a later and inferior hand. The vivid descriptions of "Behemoth" and "Leviathan" in chaps. xl and xli may also be interpolations.

The story of Job recalls that of the Babylonian Tabi-utul-Bel, a righteous man of the city of Nippur, who is undeservedly smitten by his god with a terrible disease. After he has been brought to the edge of the grave Tabi-utul-Bel sees in a dream a divinity who takes away his sins and restores him to health.

The Book of Daniel is a pseudograph, written about 165 B.C., in the name of a supposed Hebrew Prophet of the days of Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus the Great. It is a political manifesto, in pseudo-historic and apocalyptic form, directed against the Seleucid ruler of Syria (Palestine was under his sway), Antiochus Epiphanes, who tried to force Hellenic religion and customs on the Jews. A number of scholars are now inclined to regard the first half of the book as an earlier composition, though it would appear that the whole has been subjected to a uniform redaction.

The correct rendering and interpretation of the

New Testament offer fewer difficulties to students than in the case of the Old. Greek is a better known and more resourceful language than Hebrew. Conservative views as regards many of the books still find defenders. Most critics would place the composition of the New Testament approximately between the years A.D. 50 and A.D. 150. To the former we may assign the First Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians, and to the latter the so-called Second Epistle of Peter, which all, except those dogmatically biased in favour of tradition, regard as a pseudograph. Extremely radical views as to the dates, authorship, and historical value of the New Testament books are put forward by a number of critics.

The first three Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) are called "Synoptic" ("having a common outlook") because they all proceed on the basis of the same document, which is substantially identical with Mark. The First and Third Evangelists, especially the Third, handled their Marcan source very freely. Used both in Matthew and Luke, but perhaps not known to the Second Evangelist, was a collection of sayings and parables of Jesus, to which a few episodes were added (these included only one miracle, the healing of the Centurion's son); this collection is known in critical nomenclature as Q (Ger. *Quelle* = "Source"), a lost Aramaic document, which reached the Evangelists in a Greek translation. According to the widely accepted "Two Documents" hypothesis, Matthew and Luke are each a blend of Mark (or perhaps an earlier form of Mark, *Urmarcus* = "Primitive Mark") and Q plus matter derived from oral tradition. Streeter and others favour a "Three Documents" hypothesis as regards Luke, which makes the Third Gospel consist of "Proto-Luke" plus Mark plus Q. "Proto-Luke" is considered by Streeter to be the first draft made by the Third



Evangelist; but this writer may have adapted a document by another hand. A "Four Documents" hypothesis, favoured by some critics, regards the matter peculiar to Matthew as having been taken by the First Evangelist from a document other than either Mark, "Proto-Luke," or Q. It is thought by many that Matthew and Luke originally lacked the story of the Infancy of Jesus, which they tell with such marked diversity. The exact relations of the surmised evangelical strata is still an unsolved problem.

The Gospel of Matthew probably no independent critic now regards as the work of the Apostle so named, though Matthew may have composed Q, which, however, may have been formed by a succession of anonymous scribes. This Gospel was written in the East, probably at Antioch, for Jewish readers.

The Gospel of Mark (or perhaps only the *Urmarcus*) probably comes from the pen of the traditional Mark. An old tradition that Mark put in writing Peter's reminiscences of Jesus may be true, though the Gospel as it stands is not simply a Petrine memoir. A few scholars reject the priority of Mark to Matthew, thus following what Clement of Alexandria reports as the tradition of the oldest presbyters; the view of such critics is that Mark is an abridgment and an adaptation of Matthew, with borrowings from Luke. The Gospel of Mark appears to have been written in Rome, primarily for the use of the local Church.

The Gospel of Luke is now widely admitted to have had "Luke the Physician," Paul's travelling companion on several of his missionary journeys, for its author; this opinion is defended by such important critics as Ramsay and Harnack. But there are dissentients whose critical reputation is very high. The distinguished Anglican scholar Kirsopp Lake, now quite detached from orthodoxy, has come to question

the Lucan authorship of Acts, which he formerly accepted, and inferentially that of the Third Gospel, which he, like most people, considers to be a work by the same hand. Caesarea is conjectured to have been this Gospel's place of origin; it is dedicated to "the most excellent" Theophilus, probably a high official of the Roman Empire, and is an apologetic addressed to non-Jews.

The Gospel of John is rarely held to-day to be the work of John the Son of Zebedee, who, according to R. H. Charles, Alfred Loisy, Robert Eisler, and other scholars, was beheaded, together with his brother James, by Herod Agrippa I in the year A.D. 44, long before the Fourth Gospel could have been written. Many critics regard the author as a John the Presbyter (or "Elder"), who is first mentioned by Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis (2nd century A.D.). This John is generally believed to have belonged to the Church of Ephesus, and Ephesus is held by nearly all critics to have been the Gospel's place of publication. He had perhaps seen Jesus, though few would identify him, as Von Soden did, with "the disciple whom Jesus loved." The late B. W. Bacon of the U.S.A., a leading authority on the Fourth Gospel, believed that, though the Fourth Evangelist may have lived at Ephesus, he could not have been John the Presbyter, who, in Bacon's opinion, was a member of the Jerusalem Church and held crude apocalyptic views, quite unlike those of the mystic who wrote the Gospel. Although the Fourth Evangelist is acquainted with the Synoptic Gospels (doubtfully with Matthew), he departs very radically from their point of view. An orthodox verdict is that his work is rather "an inspired meditation" on the life of Jesus than a true history. This impressive, and in places very beautiful, mystical manual is full of symbolism. The "disciple whom Jesus loved,"

and who in the last chapter (probably added by a later hand) is identified with the author of the book, is perhaps, as Bacon opined, a purely ideal figure. The Fourth Gospel has undergone a certain amount of interpolation and disarrangement. A few critics regard the preface about the functions of the Logos—Jesus is never called the Logos in the body of the work—as having been added later; but such a work must surely have had a preface. The author, who is anti-Semitically inclined, was probably of Jewish origin. The Pharisees figure in his pages, but not the Sadducees and the Herodians. The author represents “the Jews”—an undifferentiated mass—as the enemies of the Son of God.

The Gospels were composed between about A.D. 70 and A.D. 110 (or A.D. 115), though some of their sources may go back to A.D. 50 or even A.D. 40. The more radical critics contend for considerably later dates, at any rate for the Gospels in their present forms. Recent palaeographical discoveries, like the John Rylands fragment (John viii, 31–33 and 37–38 (in part)), support a conservative estimate. Experts date this fragment of papyrus about A.D. 130.

The Acts of the Apostles is almost certainly from the pen of the Third Evangelist; it is his “second treatise” to Theophilus. If the Third Evangelist was the traditional Luke, then a friend of Paul of Tarsus, and one who must have had some acquaintance with the earliest propagandists or their immediate followers, wrote the first record of Christian beginnings. The Acts of the Apostles seems to have been indebted to more than one written source; it contains fragments of a travel diary, whose presence is shown by the transition from “they” to “we” as a personal pronoun (the “We” document). Those critics who dissent from the tradition of Lucan authorship believe that a writer of the second century has assimilated

fragments of a first-century diary, probably written by "Luke the Beloved Physician,"<sup>1</sup> to his not wholly reliable history of the early days of the Church—some would say that his history has very little about it to deserve the name. Loisy advocates the sensational theory that Acts is a first-century work, written by Luke, which an unknown ecclesiastic of the second century has altered, expanded, and in places curtailed. If, as seems probable, the author of the Acts was acquainted with Josephus's *Antiquities of the Jews*, he must have written later than A.D. 96.

Fourteen epistles are traditionally attributed to Paul of Tarsus. Outside the Church of Rome probably no scholar believes that he wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews. But the authenticity of the remaining thirteen epistles still finds able defenders, who are not all of them pledged to orthodoxy. F. C. Baur and many other critics of the famous Tübingen school, which he founded, regarded all, except Romans, Galatians, and 1 and 2 Corinthians as pseudographs. To-day those who accept the genuineness of any of the Paulines attribute to Paul more than these four. 1 Thessalonians is generally looked on as Paul's work, except possibly for a few interpolations. Many, however, regard 2 Thessalonians as a later document, skilfully imitating Paul's style, which was composed to check the impression given by 1 Thessalonians that the Second Coming of Jesus was imminent. The short Epistle to Philemon, pleading for mercy to the runaway slave, Onesimus, it is hard to regard as the work of a forger, though its authenticity is still denied by some. The Epistle to the Philippians is probably genuine, though inter-

<sup>1</sup> The alleged discovery of a "medical" vocabulary in Luke and Acts, made by Harnack and other critics, has a dubious value. Moreover, Luke is named a physician only in Col. iv, 14, and in Marcion's *Apostolicon* this reference to his profession disappears; so it may not have been in the original text.

polated. Greater doubt attaches to the Pauline authorship of the Epistle to the Colossians. Yet its defenders are more numerous than those of the Epistle to the Ephesians, which resembles the other very closely in style and matter; this resemblance, however, is suspicious, for it is combined with certain marked differences in style, vocabulary, and viewpoint, which suggest an imitator. In Marcion's *Apostolicon* the Epistle to the Ephesians was entitled "The Epistle of Paul to the Laodiceans"; but the work is probably a treatise, in epistolary form, and originally had no address; in any case, the traditional address seems to be proved incorrect by the manuscript evidence.

Comparatively few scholars believe that Paul is the author of the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus), though possibly one or more private letters of the Apostle have been pressed into service. The date of this epistolary group may be the first half of the second century. The existence of a highly organized Church, "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. iii, 15), with definite creeds (1 Tim. iv, 6; 2 Tim. i, 13) and written gospels (1 Tim. vi, 3, 13), seems presupposed. Paul's protest to Timothy that he is not lying when he claims apostleship at once arouses suspicion (1 Tim. ii, 7). There was no need to make such a protest to a respected colleague. The style, syntax, and vocabulary of the Pastorals are very different from those of the other Pauline Epistles.

To-day it is difficult to defend the four epistles the Tübingen critics unhesitatingly accepted, without admitting the existence of interpolations, more or less extensive. Romans may originally have had no address—such is Kirsopp Luke's view, though the manuscript evidence for it is not very strong—and seems to be a blend of several tractates in epistolary form; chap. xv was perhaps its original ending.

2 Corinthians appears to consist of two letters (or fragments of such), pieced together in reverse chronological order. The beautiful discourse on Charity in 1 Cor. xiii seems to be an interpolation, since 1 Cor. xiv, 2 follows naturally on 1 Cor. xii, 31.<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xiv, 1 looks like a clumsy insertion, whose purpose is to facilitate transition and thereby disguise the fact of interpolation. Paul could hardly have written "the wrath is come upon them (the Jews) to the uttermost" (1 Thess. ii, 16), which surely presupposes the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in A.D. 70, an event later than Paul's time.

Many critics, chiefly Dutch, typified by Van Manen, deny the authenticity of any of the Epistles ascribed to Paul, which they relegate wholly to the second century. Others, like Joseph Turmel, Alfred Loisy, and L. Gordon Rylands, believe that there is a genuine Pauline nucleus in some of the Epistles, but differ considerably as to what that nucleus is. Turmel and Loisy see in Paul a preacher of Messianism, for whom Jesus was the expected King of Israel, shortly returning from heaven to bring in a golden age of peace and righteousness, when good Gentiles would share the blessings of good Jews, faith in the claims of Jesus and his resurrection being essential to salvation. On the other hand, Mr. Rylands believes that Paul was a Gnostic, with a mystical faith in a transcendental Christ, whose crucifixion and resurrection were purely supramundane events. The concrete Messiah and his life on earth are for Mr. Rylands relatively late myths. Turmel resolves the Epistles into a small Pauline nucleus; a large number of interpolations by Marcion, the Gnostic heresiarch, who first collected Paul's writings into a corpus shortly before A.D. 140; a revision by Montanus, a revivalist of the last years of the second century; and a final revision by one or

<sup>1</sup> See Couchoud's *The Creation of Christ*, pp. 128-129.

more Catholic editors, who hoped to correct texts smacking of heresy, which they feared to expunge, not knowing how much really came from Paul's hand.

These hazardous, though ingenious speculations, are not likely to hold the field very long. But the candid scholar will admit that the problem of the Pauline Epistles is a difficult one to solve, and that criticism has by no means reached finality here.

The Epistle to the Hebrews is an eloquent treatise inculcating some kind of Christian Gnosis. Much is made of a mystical doctrine, outstripping "the first principles" (rudimentary teaching), which the writer is anxious to disclose to his readers, since they deserve it (Heb. vi, 1, 29), although a little earlier he has treated them as spiritual babes in "need of milk" (Heb. v, 12). This unknown Christian philosopher probably writes from Alexandria. He is under Paul's influence, but his characteristic thoughts are very different. As Matthew Arnold well puts it, for Paul the Law of Moses has become a broken fetter, whereas for our Epistolist it is the vanished shadow of a higher dispensation. Post-baptismal sins, at any rate grave ones, are regarded as unpardonable. This rigourist view, at first very popular, was finally rejected by the Church, which could not otherwise have triumphed over the Pagan world. The Epistle to the Hebrews was probably composed towards the end of the first century.

The so-called Catholic Epistles are less and less looked on as the works of their traditional authors. The First Epistle of Peter is markedly influenced by Romans, and less so by Ephesians; it is a Pauline echo, though not a very strong one. The authenticity of this document has its defenders in more than one school of critics; but the Petrine authorship is questioned even by fairly conservative scholars. Streeter is one of these; in his view the epistle is a dual

document, combining a homily to candidates for baptism with a letter, each having a different author. This work dates, it would seem, from the reign of Trajan (A.D. 98-117), when the profession of Christianity first became a statutory offence throughout the Empire (see 1 Peter iv, 16).

The so-called Second Epistle of Peter would probably now have no defenders of its traditional authorship had not this authorship been made into a dogma by Catholic and Protestant orthodoxy. Even Gore's *New Commentary on Holy Scripture* admits the epistle to be a pseudograph of the second century; it must be as late as A.D. 150, or even A.D. 170. Among other signs of lateness is its reference to the Epistles of Paul, now evidently collected into a corpus, as Holy Scripture. Its authenticity was denied by very many Christians down to the end of the fourth century; this fact alone should discredit it.

Jude is clearly a post-apostolic work (see v. 17), which quotes as authoritative two Jewish apocryphas—*The Book of Enoch* and *The Assumption of Moses*. The Epistle of James is addressed to the Jews of the Dispersion, but really envisages Gentile Christians as well; it is an epistolary treatise, not a letter in the strict sense. The epistle attacks the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith, without naming Paul; its very unmystical author naturally fails to understand it. The theory of Spitta that this work is a Jewish document, with only a few Christian interpolations, is difficult to sustain. A Jewish writer would hardly trouble himself about Paul's doctrine of justification by faith. Besides, the Second Coming of Jesus is announced; it is arbitrary to see an interpolation here.

The three epistles ascribed to John—the second and the third profess to come from an unnamed "Elder" (or "Presbyter")—teach an attractive, though at



times elusive, mysticism. Most critics believe that the Fourth Evangelist was their author. There are difficulties, however, attaching to this view. The Evangelist calls the Holy Spirit the "Paraclete," whereas the Epistolist so names Jesus. The latter believes in the Second Coming of Christ as a public and spectacular event. But the Evangelist appears to envisage the return of Jesus as a mystical presence in the heart of his disciples. In spite of these objections a common authorship of all the four documents is probable. The "Presbyter" attacks heretics who deny the Incarnation and boast that they are God's "seed" scattered about a sinful world; only believers in the Incarnation are the real seed that God has sown (1 John iii, 9).

The "Revelation of John the Mouthpiece of God" (*Theologos*), long excluded from the Canon by many of the Oriental Christians, dates from the end of the first century, though it appears to contain editorial matter belonging to the following century. The theory advocated by Harnack, and suggested to him by his brilliant pupil Vischer, that the Revelation is a Christian adaptation of a purely Jewish apocalypse, does not now hold the field. R. H. Charles seems to have demonstrated that the work is substantially Christian, though incorporating and editing fragments of more than one Jewish apocalypse.

Much of the imagery is taken from the Old Testament (especially Ezekiel). The picture of the New Jerusalem is partly inspired by a passage in the Book of Tobit (Tob. xiii, 16, 17). Babylonian astral lore is also laid under contribution. The John of Patmos, who claims to be the seer of the Revelation, is traditionally regarded as the Son of Zebedee; but this view is less favoured to-day. The awful apparition of Jesus described in Rev. i, 13-17, and the vision of the wrathful lamb, with the many eyes and the cut

throat (Rev. v, 6), which is the celestial symbol of Jesus, would come strangely from the pen of a personal disciple of the Master. And would an Apostle have written of the twelve foundations of the heavenly Jerusalem as bearing "twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (Rev. xxi, 14), implicitly excluding Paul (be it noted)? For the Apocalyptist the Twelve Apostles are a glorified group of figures belonging to a vanished generation.

The question whether Jesus ever lived, or whether he is an amalgam of Jewish and Pagan ideal figures, whose story is throughout a blend of heterogeneous myths, cannot be discussed here. The Mythicist school, as it is called, has vigorous and resourceful exponents; but most scholars regard the attempts of the Mythicists to reconstruct the history of primitive Christianity without a personal founder as hopelessly quixotic.<sup>1</sup>

The writing of biographies of Jesus is of doubtful critical value. Legend has coloured the historic data too much, and outside corroborative testimony is too slender, to save the biographer from indulging in whimsical or romantic reconstructions. The day for such works as Renan's *Life of Jesus*—a fine piece of literature, which will always charm us—has long gone by. Strauss's *Life of Jesus* and Guignebert's *Jesus*, the latter published only a few years ago, are chiefly valuable as penetrating criticisms of the Gospels, though they contain speculative hints on the real course of events which may serve to guide us through the labyrinth of Christian origins.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The author of the present work has criticized the principal arguments of the Mythicists in his *Jesus Not A Myth*.

<sup>2</sup> The current "Form Criticism," to which conservative and radical critics both make appeal with very diverse results, is not considered here. The interested reader may consult the Rev. E. Basil Redlich's *Form Criticism* (pub. Duckworth).

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE SPADE AND THE CRITIC

THE attempts of Fundamentalists, like Sir Charles Marston, to force the stones of Egypt and Babylon to cry out against the Higher Critics are ludicrous. Sayce used the weight of his authority as an archaeologist to discredit the Higher Criticism of his day; but he was no Fundamentalist, though he seems to have grown more reactionary with advancing years. This very dogmatic scholar was wont to run with the hares and hunt with the hounds; while playing the role of irate theologian against "unbelieving critics" he laid himself open to the charge of belonging to their ranks. His work entitled *The Higher Criticism and the Verdict of the Monuments* often adopts critical findings. Several distinguished archaeologists, e.g. Schrader, Paul Haupt, and Friedrich Delitzsch, have given their support to the views of advanced critics.

No rational person denies that the Bible contains historical matter, or that historical as well as mythical figures appear on its pages. It is not, however, until the period of the two Kingdoms of Samaria and Jerusalem that direct confirmation can be adduced from the monuments of Egypt or Hither Asia. In 1 Kings xiv, 25, 26, there is mention of an invasion of Judea, in the fifth year of the reign of Rehoboam, by Shishak, King of Egypt. This Shishak is called in Egyptian hieroglyphic texts "Sheshenk" or "Sheshonk." On the walls of the great temple of Karnak, in Upper Egypt, Sheshonk has recorded his many military successes in Palestine, as well as in the countries of the Hagareans and the Edomites. He

boasts of 133 towns he has captured, and has himself depicted as striking 38 princes. Among the towns on his list are several belonging to the Northern Kingdom, which, judging from the inscription, became for a time a vassal state of Egypt. Of this fact, however, the Book of Kings breathes not a word. The invasion of Sheshonk is represented simply as a plundering expedition against the capital of the Southern Kingdom, resulting in nothing except the loss of a number of treasures.

Several of the Kings of Samaria and Jerusalem are mentioned in Assyrian inscriptions—Khumri (Omri), Akhabbu (Ahab), Yahua (Jehu), Minnihimi (Menahem), Paqahu (Pekah), Ausi (Hoshea), Yahukhazi (Yehoahaz or Ahaz), Khazikayahu (Hezekiah), and Minassi (Manasseh). Hazael (Haza-ilu), King of Damascus, who is often alluded to in the Book of Kings as the bitter enemy of the Kingdom of Israel, also figures on the Assyrian monuments. The Cylinder of Sennacherib (the "Tayler Cylinder" in the British Museum) boasts, among other exploits of the Assyrian conqueror, the capture of Lachish and the besieging of Hezekiah in Jerusalem ("like a bird in a cage")—events recorded in the Book of Kings.

The famous Moabite Stone, erected by order of Mesha, King of Moab (see 2 Kings iii, 4, 26, 27) fully describes the hostile relations of Israel and Moab in the reigns of Omri and Ahab.<sup>1</sup> The language of the stone is a dialectical variation of Hebrew, and the point of view and modes of speech recall the Old Testament. Mesha speaks of his god Chemosh exactly as the Book of Kings speaks of Yahweh.

On a monolith of Shalmanezar III, King of Assyria, an account is given of an important battle about

<sup>1</sup> The genuineness of the stone is no longer disputed. The Egyptologist Samuel Sharpe ably contested the claims made for it, over sixty years ago.

which the Bible is silent. This battle was fought at Karkar, near Hamath, on the Euphrates. Among the confederate kings who opposed Shalmanezzer were Hadad-idri (the Ben-Hadad of the Bible), King of Damascus, and " Akhabbu Sir-Ilai " (" Ahab King of Israel "). The year of this battle, 853 B.C., can be settled, and this serves to discredit Ussher's chronology of the period, which is calculated on data supplied by the Book of Kings. Ussher places Ahab's accession thirty years too early. Shalmanezzer III reports that Ahab furnished 10,000 soldiers and 2000 chariots—a pretty powerful force. The King of Assyria vaunts that he completely routed his foes. " I rained destruction upon them. I scattered their corpses far and wide." But whether Shalmanezzer really achieved a victory is open to doubt.

On the " Black Obelisk " of the same Assyrian monarch, which can be seen in the British Museum, the submission of " Jehu (Yahua) son of Omri " is engraved and described. Here the Book of Kings is silent, presumably because the compiler wanted to give the impression that Yahweh always favoured his unscrupulous and bloodthirsty servant on account of his zeal against the enemies of his god. The submission of Jehu to Shalmanezzer took place a dozen years after the battle of Karkar. The Book of Kings does not make Jehu a descendant of Omri; but all the rulers of the Kingdom of Samaria, as well as the realm itself, are called in Assyrian inscriptions " House of Omri " (*Bit Khumri*), so important in the eyes of foreigners was the monarch who made Samaria his capital, and whom the Book of Kings dismisses in a few lines.

There is a brief allusion in the Book of Kings to " the ivory house " which Ahab built for himself in Samaria (1 Kings xxii, 39). In 1933 Crowfoot excavated on the site of this house and found a large

number of ivory plaques, which probably served as panels to the walls; these plaques are beautifully carved with figures of Egyptian deities and other Egyptian motives, but the style points to Phoenician craftsmanship, as one would expect from Ahab's relations with the King of Sidon, whose daughter Jezebel he married.

On the site of Samaria Crowfoot also found a large number of inscribed potsherds, which served as invoices of the jars of oil and wine handed over as tribute to the King. One of the names on the potsherds is "Elisha." This Elisha could not have been the Prophet who figures so frequently in the Book of Kings and was active after Ahab's death; but here we have valuable evidence of the currency of the name in the ninth century before Christ.

The Wellcome Archaeological Research Expedition under Mr. Starkey excavated Tell Duweir, a mound about twenty-five miles south-west of Jerusalem, the site of a ruined bastion. Among other things Mr. Starkey found a number of letters on potsherds, written in the ancient Hebrew script (not the "square" characters, derived from the Aramaic, which gradually came into use after the return from the Exile). These letters lay amid the debris of a guard-room. The bastion was one shattered by Nebuchadnezzar (Nabukudur-usur) during his siege of Jerusalem. Lachish and Azekah, which the Book of Jeremiah mentions as the last of the "fenced cities" of Judah to fall before the assault of the King of Babylon, are referred to in these letters. One letter seems to be concerned with events recorded in the Book of Jeremiah. "The commander of the army, Achbor the son of Elnathan, went down to Egypt. And to Hodaiah the son of Achiah and his men he sent to take them from here. And a letter to Nedabiah, the grandson of the king, brought to Shallum the son of Yaddua from the

Prophet, saying, Beware." Is this Prophet the Uriah who prophesied against Jerusalem "according to the word of Jeremiah" (Jer. xxvi, 20-23), and whom King Jehoiakim executed? On one of the letters the name of the Prophet is given; but it can be only partly deciphered—"iah." Taking all the available facts into account, it seems probable that the Prophet referred to is Uriah.<sup>1</sup> Mr. J. N. Schofield has made the very interesting suggestion that the Lachish correspondence was used at the trial of Uriah for high treason.<sup>2</sup> Uriah fled to Egypt, we are told in the Book of Jeremiah, and was brought back by Elnathan "and certain men with him," to face his death at the King's hands. Jeremiah barely escaped the same fate. The Book of Jeremiah makes Elnathan the son of Achbor, which is the reverse of what we learn from the Lachish letters. Nedabiah, Jehoiakim's grandson, figures in one of the Chronicler's genealogies (1 Chron. iii, 18).

One of the most sensational finds in the sphere of Biblical archaeology was made nearly two generations ago. An earthen pot containing nine or ten rolls of papyrus was discovered on the island of Elephantiné, opposite Assouan, in Upper Egypt. These rolls consisted of legal documents and private correspondence, all in Aramaic, which had been exchanged between members of a Jewish military settlement at Yeb (as Elephantiné was formerly named); there were also copies of duplicates sent from Yeb to Palestine. The papyri range in date from 494 B.C. to 400 B.C. Typical Bible names—Hosea, Azariah, Zephaniah, Nathan, etc.—occur on them. There is mention of a temple to Yahweh (here called "Yahu") at Yeb;

<sup>1</sup> So high an authority as the Rev. J. W. Jack, D.D., however, thinks that the Prophet is Jeremiah (see *A Companion to the Bible*, edited by T. W. Manson).

<sup>2</sup> *The Historical Background of the Bible*, p. 196.

but other gods were worshipped along with him. Sanballat, the Governor of Samaria, with whom the Book of Nehemiah has familiarized us, is also mentioned.

Prof. J. Garstang's excavations on the site of ancient Jericho have revealed a succession of cities, starting from the early Bronze Age (about 2000 B.C.). One of these cities Garstang believes was destroyed by fire, the walls having been breached by an earthquake just before the incendiarism. These facts show that the impossible tale (a fusion of two variants) in the Book of Joshua (chap. vi) rests on a basis of fact. Garstang's dating throws back the Exodus two centuries earlier than the usual reckoning, which, however, is still favoured by important archaeologists like Père Vincent, O.S.D.

None of the remarkable discoveries we have just considered refutes the theories of the Wellhausen and the Dillmann schools, to one or the other of which most Biblical critics to-day belong; they are even compatible with the contentions of the extreme Dujardin school of criticism. Only the most extravagant scepticism, such as that expounded by the cranky scholar Prof. Edwin Johnson, can be shaken by them.

Sir Charles Marston, author of *The Bible is True* and other Fundamentalist works, claims that the discovery of the Ras Shamra Tablets, which was begun in 1929, has undermined the whole of Wellhausen's views about the origin and growth of the Pentateuch. These tablets were found by Schaeffer and Chinet amid the ruins of Ras Shamra (the ancient Ugarit), on the coast of Asia Minor, opposite Cyprus; they are believed to date from the fifteenth and fourteenth centuries before Christ. On some of the tablets appears a Semitic dialect resembling Hebrew, in an alphabetical cuneiform script.



The Ras Shamra tablets have, undoubtedly, thrown considerable light on the folklore and religion of the Canaanites at the very time when, according to many authorities, the Beni-Israel were invading the country. Divine names familiar to readers of the Bible—Baal, El, Dagon, etc.—occur on them. “Yah” (“Yahweh”) is used in compounds. There are many striking parallels between the ritual of the Ugarit folk and that of the Pentateuchal codes, including P, which proves what no cautious critic has ever denied, that even the latest of these codes is a development from ancient precedents. “Terah,” the name of Abraham’s father, appears as a moon-god, and the tribes of Zebulun and Asher, seemingly not members of the Beni-Israel group led by Moses—this is opposed to what the Bible says—figure in the legend of a certain Keret, King of Sidon, who has a vision and a promise from his god that recalls what we read of Abraham. Mention is also made of a Daniel (“Dn-el” = “Justice of El”), who “renders justice to the widow and the orphan,” thus confirming the views of many critics that the Daniel of Ez. xiv, 14, 20 was a remote figure, whom the Prophet Ezekiel conjoined with Job and Noah, and not his alleged contemporary in Babylon.

The historical character of the Patriarchs has not been proved by these discoveries; but the Ras Shamra tablets, in the opinion of distinguished archaeologists like Dussaud, do strongly indicate that the basis of the patriarchal legends in Genesis is very ancient. The stories of the wanderings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob may have been adapted from Canaanite folklore not very long after the Beni-Israel had settled in Canaan. What element of historical truth there is in them, if any, is not yet and may never be discoverable. Some of the Israelite tribes, it seems probable, never left Canaan for Egypt at all, and the

Genesiac myths or legends of the "Abrahamic" age may have developed among them before the arrival of the escaped serfs of the Pharaoh, whom Moses led. The extreme scepticism of Cheyne, following Winckler, about the sojourn of the Beni-Israel in Egypt does not appeal to most critics, though we must confess that so far the Egyptian monuments have yielded no evidence whatever on the subject. The events recorded in Exodus are seen through a halo of miracles; but the passage of the "Yam Suph" (*not* the Red Sea) is within the bounds of natural possibility. No discoveries either at Ras Shamra or elsewhere have discredited the strongly grounded critical opinion that none of the legends of the Patriarchs, *as we have them*, were committed to writing before the early period of the Hebrew monarchy, subsequent to the reign of Solomon; their final redaction belongs to the post-exilian age.

If the Amraphel of Gen. xiv is really the great Hammurabi of Babylon (about 1950 B.C.?), and if the other kings there listed as Amraphel's allies have been correctly identified with Elamite and other monarchs mentioned in cuneiform texts—many archaeologists dispute this—the events described may have been more or less historical; there is no certainty about this, and Sayce's inference that Gen. xiv is a translation into Hebrew from a Babylonian original, or at least closely follows a Babylonian text, far outstrips the available data. But granting that Abraham is a figure of history, who really fought in the armies of powerful kings, the fact of the trek of a Babylonian or Aramean sheik named Abraham or Abram ("High Father") into Palestine during the reign of Hammurabi—a trek that was the beginning of the formation of the highly composite Israelite people—does not render more credible the mass of strange and inconsistent lore—Sayce dismissed much

of it as Bedouin gossip—that has gathered round his name in the Book of Genesis.

Joseph may have been an historical figure or assimilated to one. The two blended and disharmonious narratives of his fortunes (from the J and E documents) were not penned by his contemporaries. The writers (or their sources) were certainly very well acquainted with Egyptian customs and ideas. But the Egyptian names in the story point to a period many centuries later than the time when Joseph is said to have lived. The blessings and curses of the dying Jacob on his sons (Gen. xlix) are really figurative descriptions of the Hebrew tribes, not of individuals; the personal note is entirely lacking.

If archaeology has confirmed many statements of the Old Testament, it has discredited others. Cuneiform tablets of the times of the last Babylonian dynasty, and of the reign of Cyrus the Great, have supported the conclusions of the critics that the Book of Daniel was written much later than the period to which its alleged author is said to have belonged. No contemporary could have penned so inaccurate a history of this period. Belshazzar (Bel-sar-usur) was co-regent for a while with his father, Nabonidus (Nabu-nahid), the last king of the dynasty founded by Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar. The Book of Daniel speaks of him as king and makes him the son of Nebuchadnezzar. Darius the Mede is unknown to history, and seems to be due to a blending of Gobryas (Gubaru), whom Cyrus appointed his governor in Babylon after taking the city, and the Persian king Darius I (Hystaspes), later than Cyrus, whom the Greeks defeated at Marathon in 490 B.C.

Noah's ark, with its weird menagerie, does not cease to be mythical because Sir Leonard Woolley's excavations on the site of Ur of the Chaldees have

yielded strong evidence of a flood—apparently more than one—and of a pre-diluvian civilization in Lower Mesopotamia, which was thus catastrophically destroyed. For three quarters of a century it has been known that the two Deluge stories in Genesis are closely paralleled on Assyrian cuneiform tablets found at Kouyunjik (the site of Nineveh); these tablets came from the library of King Ashur-bani-pal and may be seen in the British Museum. Babylonian counterparts of the Garden of Eden and Tower of Babel myths have also come to light. All well-informed persons admit to-day that many of the folk tales of the ancient Hebrews derive from Babylonia and Egypt. The Code of Hammurabi, now in the Louvre at Paris, has a remarkably close likeness to the oldest code in the Pentateuch (the “Book of the Covenant,” Ex. xxi–xxiii). Hammurabi’s code was never in vogue in Egypt, nor is it likely that Moses was acquainted with it.

Archaeology has illuminated many parts of the New Testament, and has proved, if it needed proving, that the New Testament dates from the age to which tradition has always assigned it; but it has certainly not verified all its statements nor got rid of its many inconsistencies. Inscriptions have demonstrated that the author of the Acts of the Apostles writes quite correctly of the “politarchs” of Thessalonica, of the “asiarchs” of Ephesus, and of the “protos” of Melita (Malta); he rightly calls Sergius Paulus proconsul of Cyprus. These discoveries warrant the inference that Acts substantially belongs to the first century of our era, whatever revisions it may have received later.

To Sir William Ramsay we are indebted for most of the important discoveries we have just noted. In his *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen* he made full use of them and others, but has not con-

vinced all historical critics that the Acts of the Apostles deserves so high a credit as he placed upon it; his own enthusiastic estimate is occasionally qualified as regards certain episodes recorded by "Luke." Less happy is his critical use of archaeology in his attempt to rehabilitate the Lucan narrative of the Nativity. A number of impartial scholars have failed to be convinced that the discovery of Egyptian papyri relating to periodical family censuses furnishes any support to the statement of the Third Evangelist that the census of Quirinius, which Ramsay refuses to identify with the one mentioned by Josephus, was part of a system instituted by Augustus Caesar and applied to all the inhabitants of the Roman Empire. A very able but now forgotten scholar, James Thomas, in his *Our Records of the Nativity*, has examined in great detail the ingenious structure of argument in Ramsay's *Was Christ Born in Bethlehem?*, and seems to have disproved the existence of any universal censuses held by order of Augustus, who never mentions such in his *Monumentum Ancyranum*, which relates the principal events of his reign.

We may consider briefly two archaeological finds on which Fundamentalists and others have placed great value as demonstrating the essential truth of the story of Jesus told in the Gospels. The first is the so-called Antioch chalice. This object was brought to light in 1910 by some Arabs, who refused to say exactly where they found it. For a while it was widely boomed as a first-century Christian relic. This elaborately carved silver cup, about five inches in height, is chased with the pattern of a vine, and with twelve medallion-like spaces, each enclosing a human figure; of these figures five represent apostles and two Christ himself (as a youth and as an old man). The design also includes a plate with two fishes, a basket of loaves and grapes with an eagle

above them, and a lamb which looks up to Christ. Within this cup was another, hammered out of plain silver. Dr. C. A. Eisen wrote a treatise on the so-called chalice and argued for a date earlier than A.D. 64. He was confident that the inner vessel served as the Holy Grail at the Last Supper, and he believed that it had been placed within the other because of its sacred associations. Dr. Eisen declared that if the cup was not clearly Christian he would have attributed it to the reign of Tiberius or even to that of Augustus. So high an authority on questions of Classical and early Christian archaeology as Prof. Strzygowski of Vienna supported Dr. Eisen's dating. On the other hand, Mr. Bernard Cook of Cambridge was convinced that the style "would suit the Greek work of the Flavian (A.D. 70-96) or, perhaps, the Trajanic period (A.D. 98-116)." Prof. George A. Barton of Pennsylvania University, U.S.A., preferred a still later date—A.D. 120-140. Lord Conway of Allington and other art specialists (including a Jesuit priest) have attributed this notorious vessel to the sixth century. Learned opinion therefore ranges over a period of 500 years as giving the limits within which the "Antioch chalice" may have been made, and it may even be doubted whether it is an antique at all; possibly, as has been surmised, it is a modern forgery. The Arab finders who brought it to Antioch for sale produced three ornamental book-covers, a second chalice, and a silver cross at the same time, all unquestionably dating from the fifth or sixth century.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps these wily salesmen placed the plain cup within the other and set afloat the conjecture about its association with the Last Supper.

A still more sensational relic is the Holy Shroud of Turin. Dr. Paul Vignon and Dr. Pascal have

<sup>1</sup> *Archaeology and the New Testament*, p. 27, by Rev. S. L. Caiger.

expertly argued the case for and against with a great wealth of learning, neither admitting that he has been influenced by theological bias. This shroud can certainly be traced as far back as the fourteenth century, when it came into the possession of de Charnys of Troyes; it may have been brought from Constantinople in 1205, when an object of this class disappeared from the capital of the Byzantine Empire. Whether the relic of Troyes, which was transferred to Turin in 1578, can be identified with a shroud mentioned as early as the seventh century or with one that St. Nino, about the year A.D. 335, declared to have been removed by Peter from the Sepulchre of Jesus, is a matter of debate.

Photography of the shroud reveals the negative image of a man who appears to have undergone scourging and crucifixion, and whose heart had been pierced by a lance. The head bore marks of severe injuries from a metal cap, not a crown of thorns. Traces of spices were found on the shroud. Dr. Paul Vignon made elaborate experiments, which, in his opinion, showed that the negative image was produced by ammonia vapours given off by the body in a state of excessive perspiration and reacting to the myrrh and the aloes used for its embalming. He concluded that the corpse must have been removed or have vanished from the shroud shortly after having been enwrapped in it. The shroud shows traces of blood. But there are other marks of a pinkish colour, which suggest either miracle or fraud. Dr. Vignon scouts the possibility of the latter alternative.

If we reject Dr. Vignon's theory of the origin of the negative image on the shroud, fraud may be the full explanation, though there seems no question that the cloth is really a shroud. But possibly the shroud did hold the corpse of a man who was hideously tortured to death, it may have been with his own

consent; but one may reasonably suspect that trickery as well as cruelty accounts for its present appearance. The body may have been removed, as Dr. Vignon holds, almost immediately after death; a shroud, purporting to belong to Jesus, not a corpse, was wanted. Possibly the wretched victim was still living at the moment of removal. The preparation of a foul crime to make a relic was not abhorrent to the ethics of many pious but immoral persons in the Middle Ages, and there are even modern cases of religious fanatics submitting to crucifixion.

No healing or other miracles are reported to have occurred in connection with this shroud—a very strange fact if it has been generally held sacred since the dawn of Christianity. Moreover, the admission of its authenticity is as awkward for orthodoxy as for heterodoxy. According to the Fourth Gospel, Peter saw in the tomb of Jesus “the napkin that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself” (John xx, 7). Here we have two burial garments mentioned, instead of a single wrapping for the corpse. How, again, are we to explain the traces of head-wounds, which Dr. Paul Vignon does not think were caused by a crown of thorns? Tradition is flouted in two particulars. And there is yet a third. The body that was wrapped in the shroud was pierced at the wrists, not in the hands. Dr. Vignon and those who support his thesis hold that this fact tells strongly in favour of the authenticity of the shroud. No forger, it is argued, would dare flout the universal tradition of the pierced hands—a tradition resting on two Gospel texts, Luke xxiv, 40, and John xx, 25 (the former is probably an interpolation). The piercing of the wrists would make it possible for the crucified victim to remain on the cross, whereas the piercing of the hands would inevitably tear the body away. But



if the buttocks were supported by a wooden rest, the body would not be subjected to excessive strain from the nails. Possibly the man who served the purposes of the medieval relic-forgery had to be pierced through the wrists because no "sucedaneum" was available.

The Holy Shroud belongs to the House of Savoy, whose living representative, H.M. Victor Emmanuel III, refuses to submit his property to a scientific examination. Where science is not allowed to have access to all the data necessary for a judgment, that judgment should be withheld.

## CHAPTER IX

### SUMMING UP

THE keen criticism to which the Bible has been subjected by so many critics, actuated by the most various biases, though nearly all of them making their investigations as Christians or Jews anxious to offer an enlightened defence of their faith, must rob it of the sacrosanct character with which orthodoxy has invested it. The spade of the archaeologist has reinforced the critic's pen. But for the fact that the claim to possess a written revelation from God is integral to all systems of Christianity, whether Protestant or Catholic, the Bible would long ago have been placed by all decently instructed men in the same category as other literature for which special sanctity is claimed.

The Higher Criticism is not destructive only of conservative views about the Bible. Wherever its methods have been applied venerable traditions, created by patriotism or religion, have again and again been scrapped or drastically revised. The Hindu Code of Manu, fabled to have been revealed by Brahma himself to the mythical legislator in whose name it was framed, has been shown to be a late compilation, the work of many hands. The Buddhist Tripitaka is now admitted to have been shaped, over a period of many generations, by many unknown writers, issuing very often as oracles of the perfect teacher their own wisdom or folly. How much really comes from the Buddha in those long discourses and collections of pregnant aphorisms will never be finally settled. Even the historicity of the Buddha

has been questioned by a few scholars. That very noble and keen-minded woman, the late Mrs. Rhys Davids, a daring Higher Critic of the Buddhist Scriptures, sought to disprove the Blessed One's utterance even of the Four Holy Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path, believed by most experts to constitute the very essence of his teaching, and turned the preacher of a selfless Nirvana, for whom no Creator looked down from heaven with aid, into a mystical optimist, urging man, a very god in travail, to tread a strenuous moral road from "a more to a most." Few authorities on Buddhism have followed Mrs. Rhys Davids, great Pali scholar though she was, in her drastic reconstructions. But that accretions of a later age have transfigured a slender element of history in the legend of the Buddha, and have enlarged and probably distorted, in less or greater measure, his actual teaching, all candid scholars are agreed. The myth grew and spread until a score of different systems came to bear the stamp of the great image. In the later history of Buddhism, especially in Tibet, pious fraud played a conspicuous part, fostering new sects and priestly tyranny, thus nullifying the original evangel.<sup>1</sup>

Zoroaster (Zarathustra), who seems to have been an historical figure, though his date is very uncertain, composed only a small portion of the Avesta—the collection of hymns known as the Gathas.

Criticism has resolved the Vendidad, the great ritual and ethical code which piety has long regarded as a revelation made by Ahura Mazda to his Prophet, into an anonymous compilation of very gradual growth, thus recalling the modern critical view of the formation of the alleged Law of Moses.

<sup>1</sup> *g Ter-bston* ("Taket-out-of-treasure") is a Tibetan title of several sect-founders or propagandists, who claimed to have found hidden scriptures (generally fraudulent).

Historical criticism has demonstrated the mythical character of the persons and events that characterize the story of Greek and Roman origins. We believe to-day in the reality of neither Theseus nor Romulus. Livy's narrative of the times of the monarchy and the early republic of the City of the Seven Hills has been discredited by the investigations of Niebuhr, Mommsen, Cornwall Lewis, and Ettore Pais.

"A critical and exhaustive examination," writes the last of these scholars, "reveals the legendary character of what is presented to us as the history of the first four centuries of Rome." And again: "In examining the early history of Rome the critical historian is ever brought face to face with the falsification of the ancient annalists; in investigating the researches of certain modern critics and archaeologists of the Peninsula he likewise—alas too frequently!—finds himself in the presence of inaccuracies and even of misrepresentations."<sup>1</sup> How strongly this reminds us of the history of the Higher Criticism of the Bible. In this field of study, as in that of Roman antiquities, reactionary critics and archaeologists strive to bolster up tradition by loose and inaccurate assertions, and even, in certain cases, wilfully distort or suppress the relevant facts.

Under the searchlight of the critic many favourite tales that have long passed as historical facts have been dissolved into fable. Legend is less conspicuous in the history of England than in the histories of ancient Greece and Rome, or in the history of the ancient Hebrews; but it is still there, and no properly informed narrator of our past can accept as true such incidents as Alfred burning the cakes of the cowherd's wife or harping disguised in a Danish camp, Cnut rebuking the waves from his chair on the seashore, the gallant rogueries of Robin Hood, the wild dis-

<sup>1</sup> *Ancient Legends of Roman History*, pp. 222, 249.

sipations of Prince Harry in the company of Sir John Falstaff and his trial by Judge Gascoigne, Queen Elizabeth treading on the proffered cloak of Sir Walter Raleigh, and Queen Victoria handing a Bible to a kneeling barbarian and telling him it was the source of England's greatness.

In the Arthurian cycle of stories we confront little else than mythology, though there may well have been an Arthur ("Arturius" was a Latin name), a Romano-British chieftain, perhaps a "Leader of the Britons" (*Dux Britannorum*), who rallied the forces of an expiring civilization against the Saxon invader. Medieval chivalry converted him into the pattern knight, *sans peur et sans reproche*. Finally he was made to assume, through Tennyson's chaste and courteous pen, the lineaments of a Victorian English gentleman, sublimely priggish, whose marital fidelity, negated by Malory, left nothing to be desired in the eyes of the reigning queen, who doubtless recognized the reflection of her respectable German consort. Thus do legends grow. Every age assimilates the past to its own image and attributes to its heroes the ideals and thoughts of mutually alien centuries.

In our own day we behold Lenin, the prince of revolutionists, becoming more and more a creature of myth, even assuming the role of a demi-god in the eyes of certain Siberian tribes.

The extravagance of some critics is triumphantly pointed out by the traditionalists as discrediting both the conclusions and the methods of all critics who advocate novel theories. For logical minds this means that radical criticism should everywhere be refused a hearing. There is no finality in criticism. Traditions that have been shelved as sheer mythology are sometimes rehabilitated as historical facts. Troy was really burned to the ground. The walls of Jericho fell, owing to earthquake, during an assault.

The Labyrinth was an ancient Cretan palace, the nucleus of a great island civilization, instead of being, as some historians had conjectured, a realm in sky-land. But we are not brought any nearer by these discoveries to the quarrels of Agamemnon and Achilles, the wall-dissolving blasts of the trumpets of the Hebrew priests, or the Minotaur and Ariadne's thread.

"Holy Bible, book divine" must go the way of all other fond delusions. For the Word of God we must substitute the Word of Man. To call the best of human teaching divine may or may not be a legitimate way of speaking. But where we have to deal with the human we are bound to judge the value of what is presented. We sift our data in order to select or reject. Nowhere do we reach a final court of appeal where the task of investigation is closed. It is the craving for finality that drives so many into the Church of Rome or, where prejudice or semi-rationalism makes this impossible, to the presence of some mystagogue, who plays the role of a transcendental oracle and rushes in where angels fear to tread. Those who dare not walk without mental crutches should leave all critics alone. But let them at least refrain from abusing and slandering the men who have taken up the unpopular task of opening up new vistas of truth. Such pioneers may deeply regret the loss of old glories, yet, when new glories dawn on the horizon, may be able to say with John Keats:—

"Then felt I like some watcher of the skies,  
When a new planet swims into his ken,  
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes  
He stared at the Pacific, and all his men  
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise,  
Silent upon a peak in Darien."

The uniqueness of the Bible, and of the nation for whom and by whom most of it was written, is pleaded as a decisive argument for not applying to it the

same treatment as to the rest of the world's literature, whether sacred or profane, however many features the Bible may show that link it with other expressions of the human spirit. Egypt, Babylon, and Persia have played significant roles in the drama of civilization. But what immortal records have they left behind to feed the souls of innumerable peoples? Edom and Moab, the near neighbours of the Beni-Israel, produced no sacred books.

The argument derives part of its cogency from our ignorance of the past. Until the present century we knew nothing of the great Code of Hammurabi and its affinities with the "Book of the Covenant" (Ex. xxi-xxiii). Ps. civ bears a number of resemblances to Amenhotep IV's hymn to Aten, and between the phraseology of the Babylonian penitential psalms and that of the Hebrew there are many parallels. Forecasts of a golden age may have received their most impressive forms in the Bible; but they were not unknown outside Israel. Language that recalls Hebrew Messianism occurs in Babylonian and Egyptian texts.

"Thou sweet spring for the thirsty in the desert. It is closed for those who speak there, it is open for those who keep silent there. When the silent man cometh, he findeth the spring." Had these words been addressed to Yahweh, instead of being part of a hymn to the Egyptian god Thoth (Tehuti), and had they found a place in the Hebrew Canon, what rivers of pulpit eloquence and what lavish expenditure of commentator's ink would have extolled their superhuman beauty and worth! "Be still, and know that I am God" (Ps. xlv, 10) is the Hebrew counterpart of this passage. How many more ideas of an exalted religious tenour, set forth with literary adornments of even greater charm, may have been expressed in the long perished books of the great civilizations that surrounded the little Hebrew states, who can ever tell?

Maxims of Babylonian and Egyptian sages, as we have already noted, modern critics and archaeologists have discovered in the Book of Proverbs. It is possible that Edomite wisdom has also found a place there. The superb Book of Job, none of whose characters belong to Israel, may have been based on an Edomite work. Jeremiah writes: "Concerning Edom, thus saith Yahweh of hosts: Is wisdom no more in Teman? is counsel perished from the prudent? is their wisdom vanished?" (Jer. xlix, 7). Obadiah prophesies that Yahweh will "destroy the wise men out of Edom" (v. 8). It is most unlikely that this wisdom found no literary expression. Nor is it credible that Edomite literature consisted of nothing but collections of proverbs and moral saws. Surely the Edomites, so close akin to the Hebrews, had their sacred books. How much of it was destroyed by John Hyrcanus and his successors when they imposed Judaism, at the sword's point, on all the peoples of Lower Syria and levelled so many cities in the interests of a fanatical religion?

On the resemblances between Israel and Moab the famous Biblical critic Julius Wellhausen writes: "The people of Yahwé on the one hand, the people of Chemosh on the other, had the same idea of the Godhead as head of the nation, and a like patriotism derived from religious belief—a patriotism that was capable of extraordinary efforts, and has no parallel in the West either in ancient or modern times. The mechanism of the theocracy also had much that was common to both nations; in both, the king figures as the deity's representative; priests and prophets as the organs through which he makes his communications."<sup>1</sup> Are we entitled to hold that the Moabites, who possessed cities and were not solely a pastoral and agricultural folk, produced no literature, either

<sup>1</sup> *Encyclopaedia Biblica* (art.: *Moab*), p. 3177.



sacred or profane? Did their priests never codify their ritual? Did their kings never issue laws in the name of Chemosh? Were all their prophets merely court oracles? Or is it not probable that at least a few of them, like those of the Hebrews, pleaded the cause of the widow and the orphan, and denounced the rich for grinding the faces of the poor? It has been justly said that the famous Moabite Stone (Mesha's Stele) reads like a chapter from the Book of Kings. If the Acts of the Kings of Moab and the legends of her heroes and prophets had come down to us, might they not have thrilled us with stories of wonders and daring recalling those of the Old Testament? Wellhausen's comment on the admitted parallelism between the two peoples betrays the typical Christian bias. "The history of the one loses itself obscurely and fruitlessly in the sand; that of the other issues in eternity." The Jews have persisted under their name in virtue of a vast complex of cultural, political, and economic factors which have not operated in the case of their neighbours. If there is miracle in all this, then we must see miracle in the rise of Rome, once a stockaded village on the Palatine Hill, to become the ruler of more than half Europe and a large part of Asia and Africa. Why was Rome chosen and not Samnium? Why did the other petty city-states of Italy sink into obscurity, while that of the fabled Romulus mounted to glory? The history of the Jews "issues in eternity" because forsooth Jesus, the Son of God, came from Jewish and not Moabite stock, though it is true that a Moabite woman was reckoned among his remote ancestors. If Jesus was really the Son of God, then it is reasonable to see a supernatural guidance in the rise of the civilization, with its theocracy and its sacred books, that prepared the way for his advent. But the mere fact that the Jewish faith has endured

for so many centuries and has given birth to Christianity, while the faiths of Edom and Moab have descended long ago into the silence that awaits all things human, does not offer us a riddle intrinsically insoluble on historical grounds.

Although our ignorance of what has perished forbids us to dogmatize, it may well be that the Bible contains the cream of what the poets and the historians of Western Asia created over two thousand years ago. Probably no other prophet arose in that ancient world who ever soared into Isaiah's empurpled heaven, or who ever pleaded with such eloquence of stern compassion as burst from the tortured heart of Hosea, just as out of the many meritorious English dramatists of the Elizabethan and Stuart periods none ever attained to the amazing greatness of Shakespeare. But ethical and literary transcendence cannot be claimed for all the contents of the Bible. Many of its pages are poor stuff from the literary or the educational standpoint, though even poor stuff may possess a considerable value for the archaeologist and the student of folklore.

Bias largely determines our evaluations. In the eyes of passionate pietists the literature of ancient Israel, at any rate whatever of it has entered the Canon, outweighs everything that ancient Hellas ever produced. But many good judges of what constitutes fine literature will prefer the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* to the Book of Genesis. If the story of Joseph touches us to tears, the same can be said of the tale of the wayworn Odysseus, restored after so many years to his faithful wife Penelope, and of the delicate picture of the last leave-taking of Hector from his wife and his baby boy. Who would be sorry if the gross myth of Lot and his daughters had been displaced by the lovely tale of the encounter of Odysseus with Nausicaa and her merry maidens? Homer's war-

rriors are not more ruthless than those of the Book of Judges; their not infrequent decency and humaneness can be set against their lust for blood.

In the later products of Hellenic thought we find depths sounded that were seldom imagined by the Hebrew brain. Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, with their dramatization of eternal ethical principles in a rich variety of time-settings, may be weighed in the balance with the scolding prophets of Israel, and on an impartial estimate it seems hard to decide with which nation the moral superiority finally lies. We are indebted both to the Greek classics and to the Bible for the values that are wrought into our civilization. As Matthew Arnold loved to remind us, a culture that is sanely ethical must be both Hellenist and Hebraist.

Plato's metaphysical flights give us something the Bible does not supply. The epic of Socrates as told in the *Phaedo* and *The Apology* lifts us into "a nobler ether, a diviner air" than anything the Old Testament relates of the last days of its heroes. There is, to be sure, dignity and pathos of the highest kind in the story of the Crucifixion; but it exhibits a "failure of nerve" from which the passing of the Sage of Athens is free. Only by a strange theological interpretation, which forces horror into the jaws of absurdity, can the bitter death-cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" be made to wring more than an embarrassed pity from our hearts.

Where among the ancient Hebrews shall we find the encyclopaedic and constructive brain of Aristotle, "the master of those who know," as Dante calls him? What the Bible tells us of the wisdom of Solomon suggests the typical Oriental exaggeration of a Sultan's shrewdness and inquisitiveness. Solomon may not have been wiser than Akbar the Great, if so wise. Perhaps his wisdom is a myth.

Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus* is as serene as any poem in the Psalter, and breathes a calmer and a broader piety. "Thou makest order out of disorder, and what is worthless becomes precious in thy sight; for thou hast fitted together good and evil into one, and hast established one law that lives for ever."<sup>1</sup>

In the Books of Samuel and Kings we find many pages of beauty and vivid imagination. But the Hebrew historians are remoter from those of the modern world than is the great Thucydides, who strives after an objectivity to which the ancient East was a stranger.

"Slowly the Bible of the race is writ." From the harsh and bloodthirsty war-songs of the savage to the sustained harmony of Milton, the "organ voice of England," from the jejune and drearily repetitive records of the Babylonian chronicler to the magic pages of Gibbon, from crude stories of banshees and ghouls to the delicate fancies of Hans Andersen, from the halting philosophizings of ancient Hebrew and Egyptian sages to the metaphysics of Spinoza and Hegel what an evolution! If this human inheritance does not content us, if we must yearn after infallible oracles and regard as contemptible the flickering light of a reason that can claim no illumination from above on the dark and tangled pathway of the illogical, if we fear that to break free from the shackles of sacred books and creeds may one day thrust us into the everlasting bonfire, then we may turn aside from the perilous task of Rationalism and be comforted by the knowledge that churches and temples await us still, with rites and dogmas to silence all our doubts. Yes, we can obstruct the vital urge of the human intellect and the human will; but in so doing we shall become the agents and the victims of innumerable cruelties and oppressions.

<sup>1</sup> A translation of the whole hymn is given in the Rev. W. W. Capes's *Stoicism*, p. 41 (pub. S.P.C.K.).

## TIME CHART

The earliest dates and those of the beginnings of Christianity must be regarded as approximate. 1950 B.C. may be fifty or more years too late for Hammurabi.

B.C. 1950	Abraham treks into Palestine. Perhaps the stories of Abraham and the other Patriarchs are tribal rather than personal.	Code of Hammurabi, King of Babylon.
1445	Exodus from Egypt under Moses, according to some authorities. Others prefer the date 1224 B.C.	Amien-hotep II, the contemporary ruler of Egypt.
1407	The Beni-Israel, led by Joshua, invade Canaan. Jericho breached by earthquake and burned to the ground, as excavations show.	
1377-1025	Period of the Shophetim ("Judges"). Chronic anarchy and invasions, diversified by local peace and order under temporary war-lords or priests.	Minoan and Mycenaean civilizations breaking up, the historic Greeks invade Crete, the Aegean Isles, and the Greek mainland.
1200	Defeat of Sisera by Barak, celebrated in the contemporary so-called Song of Deborah.	The Philistines, an Aegean folk, now enter Canaan and annex a large part of the coastal region.
1025-1010 1010-970 970-936	Period of the Early Hebrew Monarchy. <i>Saul</i> . Philistines dominant in Canaan when he becomes king <i>David</i> . Capture of Jerusalem from the Jebusites. <i>Solomon</i> . Building of the Temple.	Zoroaster flourished perhaps about 1000 B.C., or perhaps later.
936	Division of the country into the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah, the first under Jeroboam and the second under Rehoboam, son of Solomon.	Sheshonk (Shishak), King of Egypt, invades Palestine.
886	Accession of Omri, King of Israel. Samaria becomes the northern capital.	"Homer" may have composed the <i>Iliad</i> and the <i>Odyssey</i> some time in the ninth century B.C.
874	Accession of Omri's son, Ahab. Elijah opposes the cult of Baal.	
853	Battle of Karkar. Ahab and his confederates fight the Assyrians.	Shalmaneser III, the contemporary King of Assyria.

# TIME CHART

115

B.C. 847	Moabite Stone, set up by Mesha, King of Moab, celebrates his victories over Israel in the days of Omri and Ahab.	
841	Jehu overthrows the dynasty of Omri. His usurpation supported by Elisha.	Shalmanezzer III invades Kingdom of Israel and receives Jehu's submission.
788- 747	Jeroboam II King of Israel. The Northern Kingdom now at the height of its glory. Jonah and Amos now prophesy. Hosea prophesies a little later. J and E sources of the Pentateuch completed in ninth and eighth centuries B.C.	First Olympiad 776 B.C. The legendary date of the founding of Rome 753 B.C.
747	Zechariah, last king of Jehu's dynasty, murdered by Shallum, who becomes king.	
721	Capture of Samaria by Sargon II, King of Assyria, who deports 27,200 of its inhabitants. End of the Kingdom of Israel.	
701	Sennacherib, King of Assyria, lays siege to Jerusalem, then under Hezekiah. Isaiah the contemporary of Hezekiah, Is. i-xxxv largely his work.	
639	Accession of Josiah to the Throne of Judah.	
621	The High Priest Hilkiah discovers the "Book of the Law" (probably the nucleus of Deuteronomy) in the Temple; it seems to have been composed not very long before (the dominant critical opinion). Josiah's Reformation.	
608	Josiah slain at Megiddo when fighting against Necho, King of Egypt.	Destruction of Nineveh by the Chaldeans and the Medes 612 B.C. End of the Kingdom of Assyria.
586	Nebuchadnezzar (Nabu-kudur-usur), the Chaldean King of Babylon, captures Jerusalem and destroys the Temple. Jeremiah prophesies before and after the siege. The Book of Jeremiah composite and completed after the Prophet's time, but contains his oracles. End of the Kingdom of Judah. Many Jews deported to Babylonia (the Exile). Ezekiel prophesies in Babylon during the Exile.	
538	Capture of Babylon by Cyrus the Great. Rise of the Persian Empire. The "Second Isaiah" (Is. xl-lv). Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings probably compiled from older works in the 6th century B.C.	

B.C. 536	Partial restoration of the Jewish polity by decree of Cyrus. Many exiles return from Babylon.	
516	The Temple rebuilt by decree of Darius I. Zerubbabel head of the Jewish state. The Prophets Haggai and Zechariah (author of Zech. i-viii). Anonymous prophesy "Malachi" ("My Messenger") about this time.	The Greeks defeat Darius I at Marathon in 490 B.C. Confucius and the Buddha flourished in the 6th century B.C.
444	Arrival of Nehemiah as "tirshatha," an officer of Artaxerxes I, empowered to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Samaritan schism (or perhaps 100 years later). Probably Books of Job and Ruth composed about this time.	Herodotus, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, Thucydides flourished in 5th century B.C.
397	Arrival of Ezra the Scribe in Jerusalem (according to Dr. Oesterley); usually dated 458 B.C. Memoirs of Ezra and Nehemiah, much edited by the compiler of the Book of Chronicles and originally an appendix to his work. The Pentateuch completed by the addition of the Priests' Book (P)—laws and ritual in a narrative setting. Book of Jonah composed about 350 B.C.	Socrates put to death in Athens 399 B.C. Plato, disciple of Socrates. Rome sacked by the Gauls 390 B.C.
331	Alexander the Great overthrows the Persian Empire and conquers Palestine.	Aristotle his contemporary.
323	Death of Alexander. His Empire is divided among his generals, Ptolemy obtaining Egypt and Seleucus Syria.	
311	The Ptolemies of Egypt become masters of Palestine. Book of Chronicles compiled about 300 B.C. The so-called Song of Solomon may be a little later.	
250	The Pentateuch translated into Greek at Alexandria, the rest of the O.T. considerably later. Greek version known as the Septuagint. Ecclesiastes and Book of Proverbs (in its present form) probably date from about this time.	First Punic War begins 264 B.C.
198	Antiochus III (of the Seleucid dynasty) conquers Palestine.	
169	Persecution of the Jews by Antiochus IV (Epiphanes), who attempts to force Hellenism on them. His policy favoured by many Jews, including a few High Priests.	
167	The Maccabean Revolt. The Chassidim (Jews loyal to Yahwism) oppose the Hellenizing Jews.	

# TIME CHART

117

R.C. 165	Death of Antiochus IV ("the little horn" of the Book of Daniel). Approximate date of the Book of Daniel.	
142	Judea becomes independent of Syria. Simon Maccabeus made High Priest and Ethnarch by popular acclamation (probably celebrated in Ps. cx). The Book of Psalms, though incorporating older matter, compiled about this time, and perhaps Zech. ix-xiv.	The Romans destroy Carthage and sack Corinth 146 B.C.
135	John Hyrcanus, brother of Simon, destroys the Samaritan Temple on Mt. Gerizim.	
105	Aristobulus I the first of the Maccabean or Hasmonean family to call himself King. The "Apocrypha" ("Deuterocanonical" books) dates from the 2nd century B.C. to the 1st century A.D.	
69	Dispute over the throne between Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II. Rome intervenes and finally favours Hyrcanus II	
65	Pompey the Great enters Syria and conquers Jerusalem.	
47	Rome makes the Idumean (Edomite) Antipater Procurator of Judea.	55 and 54 B.C. Julius Caesar's two invasions of Britain. 48 B.C. Julius Caesar defeats Pompey at Pharsalos.
37	Herod the Great, son of Antipater, made King of Judea under Roman suzerainty. Herod restores the Second Temple (Temple of Zerubbabel).	
4	Death of Herod the Great. <i>Jesus of Nazareth born about this time.</i>	Augustus Roman Emperor. Virgil, Ovid, Horace chief Roman poets.
A.D. 29 (or 30)	The Crucifixion of Jesus.	Tiberius Roman Emperor.
32	Conversion of Paul of Tarsus.	Tiberius Roman Emperor
56	Paul goes to Rome as a prisoner. His epistles, in so far as they are genuine, written approximately A.D. 50-64.	Nero Roman Emperor. Christianity reaches Britain perhaps in the second half of the first century.



A.D. 64	The Neronian Persecution. Christians in Rome accused of setting fire to the city. Paul probably now executed at Rome as leader of a pestilential sect, and perhaps Peter.	A.D. 68 Revolt against Nero, who commits suicide. Anarchy throughout the Empire until Vespasian becomes Emperor. Vespasian and his son Titus besiege Jerusalem.
70- 110	Approximate dates of the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistle to the Hebrews, though some critics give much later dates.	A.D. 70 Destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. End of the Third Temple.
96	Approximate date of the Revelation of John.	Domitian Roman Emperor.
98- 110	Approximate dates of the so-called First Epistle of Peter and the "Catholic" Epistles ascribed to James, John and Jude.	The Emperor Trajan (98-117) makes Christianity a statutory offence (see 1 Peter iv, 16).
150	Approximate date of the Second Epistle of Peter, the latest book in the N.T.	A.D. 135 Last Revolt of the Jews suppressed by Hadrian (117-138). Antoninus Pius (138-161). Marcus Aurelius (161-180).
313	Edict of Toleration proclaimed at Milan by Constantine I, the first Christian Emperor. Christianity now the specially favoured cult of the Roman Empire, and at the end of the 4th century the only favoured cult. Pagan cults suppressed by imperial edicts; Judaism barely tolerated.	
397	A synod at Carthage fixes the Canon of the N.T. in its present form. Hebrew Canon settled by the beginning of the second century A.D.	Jerome's Vulgate (O.T. and N.T. translated into Latin) in the closing decades of the 4th century.
400- 1386	Conversion of the barbarians of Europe, outside the Empire, to Christianity. Consolidation of Catholicism.	1386 Jagello, Grand Duke of Lithuania, the last Pagan ruler in Europe to accept Christianity.
1517	Luther nails his theses about indulgences to the door of a church in Wittenberg. Beginning of the Reformation.	

## SUGGESTIONS FOR READING

A FAIR knowledge of the Bible is, of course, essential for an intelligent following of the bearings of criticism and archaeology. The Revised Version is more accurate than the archaic and more charming Authorized Version. The late Dr. James Moffatt's translation of the Old and New Testaments (3 vols.) makes the Bible alive and interesting to the modern man. Some acquaintance with the Apocrypha, which is less known than the Bible, is desirable.

### FOR BEGINNERS

- The Bible and its Background.* 2 vols. Thinker's Library Series. By Archibald Robertson. (Watts & Co.)  
*The Old Testament.* By "Chilperic Edwards." (Watts & Co.)  
*The New Testament.* By F. J. Gould. (Watts & Co.)  
*How We Got Our Bible.* By J. Paterson Smith. (Sampson Low, Marston & Co.)  
*History of Old Testament Criticism.* By Archibald Duff. (Watts & Co.)  
*History of New Testament Criticism.* By F. C. Conybeare. (Watts & Co.)  
*Between the Old and New Testaments.* By Rev. R. H. Charles. (Williams & Norgate.)  
*An Introduction to Old Testament Study. For Teachers and Students.* By Rev. E. Basil Redlich. (Macmillan & Co.)  
*The History of Israel.* By H. Wheeler Robinson. (Duckworth.)  
*Jerusalem Under the High-Priests.* By Edwyn Bevan. (Edward Arnold.)  
*The World's Earliest Laws.* Thinker's Library Series. By "Chilperic Edwards." (Watts & Co.)  
*The Bible and Archaeology.* By Sir Frederic Kenyon. (George G. Harrap.)  
*Bible and Spade.* By Rev. S. L. Caiger. (Oxford University Press.)  
*Archaeology and the New Testament.* By Rev. S. L. Caiger. (Cassells & Co.)

### FOR MORE ADVANCED STUDENTS

- Pentateuchal Criticism.* By D. S. Simpson. (Hodder & Stoughton.)  
*The Old Testament in the Jewish Church.* By Robertson Smith. (A. & C. Black.)

- The Problem of the Old Testament.* By James Orr. (Nisbet.)
- Sources of the Christian Tradition.* By Edouard Dujardin. (Watts & Co.)
- The Old Testament. A Reinterpretation.* By Stanley A. Cook. (S.P.C.K.)
- An Introduction to the Books of the Old Testament.* By W. O. E. Oesterley and T. H. Robinson. (S.P.C.K.)
- An Introduction to the Books of the Apocrypha.* By W. O. E. Oesterley. (S.P.C.K.)
- A History of Israel.* 2 vols. By W. O. E. Oesterley and T. H. Robinson. (Oxford Clarendon Press.)
- Record and Revelation.* Edited by H. Wheeler Robinson. (Oxford Clarendon Press.)
- The New Testament in the Twentieth Century.* By Rev. Maurice Jones. (Macmillan & Co.)
- An Introduction to the New Testament.* By Kirsopp and Silva Lake. (Christophers.)
- The Historical Background of the Bible.* By J. N. Schofield. (Nelson.)
- Samaria in Ahab's Time.* By Rev. J. W. Jack. (T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh.)
- The Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts.* 4th ed. By Sir Frederic Kenyon. (Eyre and Spottiswoode.)

*N.B.*—Most of the exponents of the Higher Criticism in the books above listed defend a moderate radicalism. Prof. James Orr and the Rev. Maurice Jones give a qualified adherence to the orthodox tradition. Dujardin is an extreme radical, who thinks that no book of the Old Testament is earlier than the fifth century before Christ; he is also an exponent of the thesis that Jesus is a wholly mythical figure.

